

The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN

NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

SEPTEMBER 21, 2011 | VOL. 47 NO. 4



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Info Menlo

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Henry Phipps of Woodside is singing in the San Francisco Opera production and world premiere of "Heart of a Soldier," based on a true story about heroic action during the collapse of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

Photo by Cory Weaver
/San Francisco Opera

Young Woodside resident in SF opera production this month

By **Dave Boyce**
Almanac Staff Writer

Henry Phipps, a Woodside resident and a seventh-grader at Nueva School in Hillsborough, has a night job. For three more evenings —and one afternoon —in September, he will perform a significant singing role in "Heart of a Soldier," a San Francisco Opera world-premiere production based on a true story of an Englishman who died in the collapse of the World Trade Center after leading 2,700 people to safety.

Henry, 12, who plays the Englishman as a boy, told the Almanac in a telephone interview that he has seven minutes on stage, starting with a solo dialog that evolves into a solo song and then a duet with acclaimed baritone Thomas Hampson, who sings the role of the hero as an adult.

Henry said he hangs out in the backstage canteen when not performing, and is considering a

career as a professional singer.

"I love singing," he said when asked how he came to the art. "I love music. I don't know. It's kind of like a break from life. It gets me out of my routines. It's just a wonderful thing."

Henry's mother, Kristina Phipps, asked him at around

two hours after that. The cast rehearsed for about four weeks over the summer, often every day, he said.

The opera, with music by Christopher Theofanidis and based on a book by New York-based journalist James B. Stewart, runs for seven performances in September, the next being Wednesday, Sept. 21.

Go to tinyurl.com/Soldier-SFO for more information.

Henry's interest in opera is about as old as his involvement with this production.

"I really didn't know a thing about it until I got this part," he said. "Now that I'm in it, I've got the bug, and I'm thinking of trying out for another opera."

He does get butterflies, but they go away. "Once I'm on and I start singing, it comes back and I do what I've always done and it kind of works," he said. "I wouldn't be surprised if I grow up to be a professional singer." ■

'I love music. ... It's kind of like a break from life. It gets me out of my routines. It's just a wonderful thing.'

HENRY PHIPPS

age 6 or 7 if he wanted to join a chorus; he agreed to try it, and joined the Ragazzi Boys Chorus. The chorus helped Henry prepare for the "Heart of a Soldier" auditions. "I owe a lot to them," he said.

He and his understudy, or cover, are the only kids in the cast, he said. After his first audition, he was called back for a second, and got the part about

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Residents revisit Stanford's offer to upgrade trail

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Residents of Ladera and Stanford Weekend Acres gathered last week to reconsider a controversial offer by Stanford University to spend up to \$10.2 million to repave and upgrade the timeworn trail that meanders through their communities along Alpine Road between Portola Valley and Menlo Park.

Whether the communities will accept the money and conditions that link renovations to that stretch of road is an open question. In 2006, a vociferous group of residents, backed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, rejected it.

A sense of current opinion should materi-

alize once the county manager's office posts results from two community meetings: The one held Thursday, Sept. 15, in Ladera; and the next set for Tuesday, Sept. 20, with facilitation from the Peninsula Conflict Resolution Center.

Stanford's offer, which expires in December, would fulfill a condition in the university's use permit with Santa Clara County. The environmental group Committee for Green Foothills argued in court that the trail should run on the Santa Clara County side of the creek, but the state Supreme Court decided in Stanford's favor.

The existing trail merges with Alpine Road in places; the asphalt is old, bumpy and cracked on that trail. But residents preferred

this familiar path to the prospect of a "suburban sidewalk," as they called Stanford's offer in 2006.

A new trail design, including its width, surface, route along Alpine Road, and method of dealing with creek bank erosion, would be up to San Mateo County, university spokesman Larry Horton wrote in an email.

"San Mateo County is the owner of this trail and as such it can decide all the details about trail design," Mr. Horton wrote. "There are only two conditions: 1) that the trail must be a multi-use trail for bicyclists and pedestrians, and 2) that it must be a safe, continuous trail. How that is accomplished is up to San Mateo County."

Stanford will not complain if its offer is

spurned, Mr. Horton said. "We will be satisfied that we met the letter and spirit of our agreement with Santa Clara County. We will accept San Mateo's decision with good spirit, and we move ahead working cooperatively with Santa Clara County."

The \$10.2 million would revert to Santa Clara County for recreational purposes, but not for use on Stanford's land without Stanford's consent, according to the text of the agreement.

So why does Stanford care about improving this trail? The campus is a not infrequent destination for residents, including univer-

See **TRAIL**, page 9

Unions sue Menlo Park over pension initiative

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Two labor unions filed a lawsuit in San Mateo County Superior Court on Sept. 15, challenging the legality of Measure L, the pension reform initiative passed last year by 72 percent of Menlo Park voters.

Measure L raised the minimum retirement age for new Menlo Park public employees, excluding police officers, by five

years to 60, and also decreased their maximum pension benefits by 0.7 percentage points to 2 percent of their highest annual salary averaged over three years.

Under this measure, a new hire who retired at age 60 after working for the city for 30 years would receive 60 percent of his or her average salary. Current employees can retire at age 55

See **LAWSUIT**, page 8

City Council tweaks proposed specific plan for downtown

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park City Council carried on into the wee hours of Wednesday morning while continuing its evaluation of the draft downtown/El Camino Real specific plan on Sept. 13.

The plan aims to describe the types of new development and building dimensions allowed downtown and along El Camino Real for the next 30 years.

Last week's discussion kicked off with 24 public speakers that included local merchants Richard Draeger of Draeger's Supermarkets and furniture merchant Mark Flegel, who opposed some aspects of the plan, such as the option to fill in parking plazas with mixed-use development, forcing customers

to park farther away from stores. As members of the Downtown Alliance, a coalition of property and business owners, they suggested locating parking garages on plaza 2 (off Oak Grove Avenue and Chestnut Street) and another next to the Caltrain station, instead of using plazas 1 and 3 as the plan suggests.

"Stand in the shoes of the property owners; stand in my shoes," Mr. Draeger asked the council. "Our livelihoods depend upon the practicality of the downtown." The Alliance has argued that forcing customers to park in a garage blocks away from stores isn't good for business.

Developer Jeffrey Warmoth

See **DOWNTOWN**, page 8



Photos by Michelle Le



Remembering Coach Parks

Friends, family, colleagues and students gathered on the Menlo-Atherton High School football field on Sept. 17 for a memorial for Coach Ben Parks, who died Aug. 19 at age 77. Coach Parks retired from M-A in 1999 after 31 years of coaching football and wrestling, but couldn't stay away, returning to work with, encourage and inspire young athletes throughout his last years. In top photo, NFL Pro Football Hall of Fame player Ronnie Lott, a former student of Coach Ben Parks, leads attendees in a moment of silence. At left, Coach Parks' son Ralph is embraced prior to the memorial service.

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Investigation of bike fatality leads CHP to change findings

■ Cyclist in Alpine Road fatal bicycle-truck accident not at fault.

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Human DNA found near the front axle of a tractor-trailer truck has led investigators from the California Highway Patrol to conclude that the November 4, 2010, collision and death of Los Altos Hills cyclist Lauren Ward was not the fault of Ms. Ward, authorities said.

The accident re-enactment and subsequent investigation, which has been ongoing since December and is now over, does not conclude that the driver of the truck is at fault, CHP Officer Art Montiel told the Almanac.

Ms. Ward died at the intersection of Interstate 280 and west-

bound Alpine Road. The driver has not been charged but no longer drives, this having been his third accident that resulted in a fatality, Mr. Montiel said.

The CHP initially determined that Ms. Ward had struck the side of the truck, in part because the truck showed no damage from the collision, Mr. Montiel said.

The discovery of the DNA and its position near the left side of axle is what prompted investigators to reconsider their findings and conclude that Ms. Ward was struck by the left front of the truck cab.

Though investigators had Ms. Ward's DNA, they have not concluded that the DNA found is that of Ms. Ward, Mr. Montiel said.

"They were not able to compare the two," he said, adding that he will be asking investigators why such a comparison was not possible. ■

Police make two arrests in burglaries of three local schools

■ Same suspect linked to Hillview, Laurel and private school break-ins.

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Reading, writing, breaking and entering — three local schools discovered an unfortunate addition to their curriculum during the past week.

Police arrested Jaime Loya Maldonado, 20, of Menlo Park, in connection with all three burglaries.

Mr. Maldonado's reputation crosses county lines. Already on probation for possession of stolen property in Santa Clara County, he also faces charges for somehow acquiring 10 laptops stolen from the Palo Alto Unified School District, according to the San Mateo County district attorney's office.

Hillview Middle School on Elder Avenue suffered the loss of 26 iPads, worth a total of \$16,000, on Sept. 9 after someone crawled through an unlocked classroom

window, according to Menlo Park police, who got the call around 8 a.m. that day.

Four days later, police said they arrived at the German-American International School on Elliott Drive around 7:30 a.m. and found that burglars had crawled in through an unlocked window to decorate the school with spray paint and sharpie markers before leaving with \$400.

Then, on Sept. 14, an alarm summoned Atherton police to Laurel Elementary School on Edge Road at 3:30 a.m., where they found two suspects with enough ingenuity to drape clothing over the jagged edges of a broken library window to avoid cutting themselves as they burgled, but without enough creativity to avoid arrest.

Atherton police said the presence of a police canine encouraged a rapid surrender. A 16-year-old boy, along with Mr. Maldonado, earned detention at the county jail. ■

Seven hours, three burglaries in Menlo

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Some people spend seven hours during the day working, while others use that time to take advantage of other people's being at work. On Sept. 13, Menlo Park police responded to three burglary reports in seven hours, according to the crime log.

Starting the day early, police arrived at the German-American

International School on Elliott Drive around 7:30 a.m. to find that someone had practiced his or her ABCs on the school walls using spray paint and sharpie markers, before absconding with \$400. Jaime Loya Maldonado, 20, has been charged in connection with that break-in.

See **BURGLARIES**,
 Continued on next page

Council members hold their noses, vote to pay state for redevelopment agency

By Sandy Brundage
Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO PARK

On Tuesday night, Menlo Park joined 86 other California cities, including Foster City, Millbrae, and Belmont, by voting to pay the state millions of dollars to keep its redevelopment agency open.

Describing state Assembly bills 26 and 27 as “pay or perish” legislation, Menlo Park Finance Director Carol Augustine laid out in stark terms what faces the city in light of the state’s desire to dissolve redevelopment agencies and redistribute the tax revenue.

“Also known as extinction or extortion,” she told the council during its Sept. 13 meeting.

In short, if Menlo Park doesn’t cough up \$3.5 million, the state will shut down its redevelopment agency (RDA).

After that first payment, the city’s ongoing obligation would be about \$829,000 a year, according to Ms. Augustine. If tax increment revenue doesn’t increase enough to cover the added expense plus the agency’s projects, the city’s general fund would bear the brunt of closing the gap, she said.

Redevelopment agencies, sometimes described as economic engines, were formed to fight blight through mechanisms such as affordable housing and code enforcement. Gov. Jerry Brown pushed for their elimination, arguing that diverting \$5 billion in property tax revenue to RDAs left

the state short on money needed for schools.

A seven-member board composed of representatives from the city, special districts, and the county would oversee redistributing that money to other agencies.

“It would mean significant change, and take away control from this council,” Councilman Andy Cohen said during the meeting.

According to city staff, the accomplishments of Menlo Park’s RDA include cleaning up blight to persuade businesses such as Pacific BioSciences, now one of the city’s top 25 revenue producers, to relocate to the Willows area; maintaining undeveloped properties; and funding drug-prevention and gang-intervention programs run by the police department.

In response to the governor’s plan, last spring Menlo Park created ongoing contracts using RDA funds to tie that money up, hoping that the state can’t take assets already allocated to programs such as code enforcement, but no one knows yet whether that strategy will pan out. It also created a new agency, the housing authority, to run the city’s affordable housing program.

The League of California Cities and the California Redevelopment Association filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the bills, arguing that Proposition 22, passed in November 2010 by 60.7 percent of voters, made it illegal for the state

to take money from local funds such as redevelopment revenue.

The California Supreme Court issued a stay on the legislation in August and will make a final ruling by the time the city’s first payment comes due in January.

However, should the court decide that the legislation is legal, the deadline for choosing to pay to keep the RDA will have passed, leaving cities in a quandary. “This could result in the dissolution of the Agency under the Dissolution Act even though the City desires that the Agency continue in existence,” the staff report states.

The fate of the new housing authority also hangs in the balance should the court uphold the legislation. Ms. Augustine told the Almanac that the city doesn’t know whether the contract between the city and the authority would hold up, so “it is unclear as to what would happen to the housing authority, and what agency would carry out the housing programs previously provided by the RDA’s housing fund (and) authority.”

As colleagues said they were holding their noses, Vice Mayor Kirsten Keith made a motion to pass the ordinance, and the council voted 5-0 in favor. The issue should return to the dais on Sept. 27, when council members are expected to actually authorize the payment. Menlo Park has filed an appeal of the \$3.5 million fee, but the state hasn’t indicated yet whether it will reduce the bill. ■

Last council meeting on draft downtown plan

Prepare to settle in for a long night at Menlo Park City Hall on Tuesday, Sept. 20, as the council holds its last discussion of the draft downtown/El Camino Real specific plan, focusing on the El Camino Real portion of the specific plan, the heavily criticized fiscal impact analysis, and public benefits associated with development within the plan’s zone.

Thankfully, that’s the only topic of regular business on the agenda. The meeting starts with a closed session at 6 p.m. to discuss a potential lawsuit over the congressional redistricting plan, with the regular session following at 7 p.m. in the

■ MENLO BRIEFS

council chambers at the Civic Center at 701 Laurel St.

Youth Gun Violence forum

San Mateo County Supervisor Rose Jacobs Gibson, who represents Menlo Park, is hosting a public forum on teens, guns, and local violence on Thursday, Sept. 29.

Staff will present the results of community surveys, discuss costs associated with gun-related violence, and share testimonies from families personally affected by shootings.

elry and cash worth an estimated \$16,000, according to police spokeswoman Nicole Acker.

Finally, still another burglary report at 2:10 p.m. brought police to a carport in the 700 block of Roble Avenue, where a cut cable lock mutely testified to the mysterious absence of a \$478 bike. ■

Email SMCdistrict4@smcgov.org or call 363-4570 to attend; seating is limited. The forum starts at 9 a.m. at 1300 South El Camino Real, Suite 114, in San Mateo.

Fence restoration

As the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission continues to install a new pipeline to carry water from the Hetch Hetchy, portions of the project in North Fair Oaks and Menlo Park are nearing completion.

Property owners who had fences taken down to make way for the pipeline in North Fair Oaks can now ask for their fences to be replaced, provided all the paperwork’s in order. Contact baydivision@sfgwater.org to check whether your property qualifies.

In Menlo Park, restoration work continues at Mid-Peninsula High School and along Ivy Drive, while the commission’s contractor prepares to tunnel under U.S. Highway 101 next week.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



Sell Now Or Wait For Recovery?

Dear Gloria,

My husband has been offered a job in another state. There are pros and cons to accepting this position. It would strengthen his resume and the salary would be 50% higher. But you can imagine what the flip side of this is – California housing, of course. We bought our house in 2008 and find that we are down at least 15% from what we paid for it. We cannot afford this kind of a loss with college and retirement to save for. What is the outlook for housing? How long would we need to keep this property to at least come out whole? What about renting it until the market comes back?

We are in such a state of indecision.

Peggy B., Redwood City

Dear Peggy,

I can sympathize with your dilemma and it is no comfort knowing you are not alone. It is impossible to predict when the housing market will begin to come back. In our area it seems to have stabilized for

the time being. There is optimism on the part of several potential home sellers with the promise of local companies going public. Personally, I do not think that alone will be enough for improvement over the broad range of our real estate market. I think we are a few years away from a strong, broad-based recovery. So you have two choices: sell your property at a loss, move on, relocate and take a better job and buy another house where property values have also fallen perhaps even more drastically. Or, you can rent your property and turn it in to an investment property. There are tax advantages to doing that which you should discuss with your tax advisor. And the local rental market is very strong with prices that would not be possible in other parts of the country. Whether or not you will break even depends on what your principle, interest, taxes and insurance equal relative to the rent you can command. And don’t forget the cost of maintenance as well as possibly hiring a property manager.

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BURGLARIES

Continued from previous page

Yet another call took investigators over to the 1300 block of Carlton Avenue shortly after 12:30 p.m. There, an unlocked rear window granted access to someone who pocketed jew-

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Obama to return to Woodside this Sunday for fundraiser

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

President Barack Obama is returning to Woodside on Sunday, Sept. 25, for a 4 p.m. gathering to meet and presumably break bread with campaign contributors, according to an announcement from his 2012 re-election campaign.

The hosts this time are Sandi and John Thompson, who, according to a source, live on or near Mountain Home Road, the same neighborhood that Mr. Obama visited on a rainy night in February when he dined with high-tech leaders.

On that occasion, Mr.

Obama flew to San Francisco International Airport, flew by helicopter to a parking lot at Canada College, and then rode by limousine via Canada and Mountain Home roads to the home of venture capitalist John Doerr.

While neither the route nor the hosts' address is made public, the gaggle of reporters and photographers awaiting the passage of the limousine tends to reveal the general location.

Also indicative is the placement of California Highway Patrol officers. For Mr. Obama's February visit, black-and-white patrol cars were

parked one-to-a-driveway along Manzanita Road. Driveways were blocked, the Almanac was told, so as to remove opportunities to turn around, thereby ensuring a one-way route for anyone who started down Manzanita from Mountain Home that evening.

A donation of \$2,500 gets you in the door. For \$7,500 (or \$10,000 for you and a friend), you can have a photo taken with the president and participate in a reception for him. Such gifts are not tax deductible.

Write to estowe@barackobama.com for more information. ■

Morris W. Rubesin

Morris W. Rubesin, 88 years old, died Sunday September 11, 2011 at Stanford Hospital. He is survived by his wife Edith (nee Weitzner), his children Stephen (Ellen) Rubesin, Roslyn (Donald) Eigler and Philip Rubesin. He is also survived by two grandchildren Hillary and Jeffrey Rubesin. Recently Morris and Edith celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with their family.

Morris was born in New York City on July 24, 1923. At age two, he moved to San Francisco with his mother Blanche and father Jacob. Morris attended George Washington High School in San Francisco and the University of California, Berkeley where he received both his Bachelor and Masters degrees in Engineering. Morris was a Fellow of the National Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, Phi Beta Kappa, and Sigma Xi. He was a pioneer of aeronautics at NACA, Ames Laboratory (forerunner of NASA) and he specialized in heat transfer and fluid dynamics. In 1958, Morris and three Ames colleagues formed Vydia, a small research firm. When he left Vydia he returned to Ames as Chief Scientist.

Morris was known for his gentle humor, his paintings and caricatures, his interest in art and architecture, but most of all his love for his family. He was well loved by his wife, children and grandchildren and will be missed but remembered with thankfulness. Private graveside services were held on September 15th at Hills of Eternity in Colma. Donations may be made to a charity of your choice.

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PAID OBITUARY

DOWNTOWN

continued from page 5

spoke in support of the specific plan, mentioning that in 2007 he was told it would take only six months to get into place. The guidelines would give him "certainty that if I bring you a project that's quality architecture and quality materials, it will get approved."

He also asked for a maximum allowed height of 45 feet near the Caltrain station area, as that would allow for "full retail height on the first floor" of a new building, whereas the 38 feet suggested by the Planning Commission is "kind of a non-height; it gets you part of the way there, not all the way there."

After public comment, the council tried to set the record straight on several items of apparent confusion: No, the trees on Santa Cruz Avenue's median won't be cut down. Yes, the plan will strive to not compete with the Farmers' Market. The plan would add between 256 to 536 parking spaces. Yes,

there were many, many public meetings advertised and held to solicit input from every Menlo Park resident, including the downtown merchants.

Last but not least, as put forth by Councilwoman Kelly Fer-

'Stand in the shoes of the property owners. ... Our livelihoods depend on the practicality of the downtown.'

RICHARD DRAEGER OF
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gusson, the city is not spending money right now to implement any portion of the plan. There are no projects, just guidelines.

The council then tweaked recommendations made this summer by the Planning Commission for the downtown area:

■ Implement a trial installation of a Chestnut Street paseo for at least a full week and up to several months.

■ Ensure that Menlo Park businesses have access to the paseo and that it won't compete with the Farmers' Market.

■ Install wider sidewalks in phases, and only where there's a logical reason to have a wider sidewalk adjacent to a specific business.

■ Keep parking garages at the same height and scale as buildings next door, and encourage employees to park in the garages via permits to save surface parking for customers. Provide opportunities for merchants to voluntarily help fund the garages, and also discourage any mixed-use development either on top of the garages or as parking plaza infill.

That leaves the El Camino Real portion of the specific plan and the fiscal impact analysis, as well as a discussion of public benefit associated with development within the plan's zone, for the next council meeting on Sept. 20.

Go to tinyurl.com/plan-163 to review all documents associated with the specific plan, including recommendations. ■

LAWSUIT

continued from page 5

and get 81 percent after working 30 years.

Finally, Measure L also took benefit increases out of the hands of the City Council —

all increases now require voter approval, which seems to be the key issue at the heart of this latest lawsuit, based on documents filed by Olson, Hagel & Fishburn, the firm representing union interests.

Describing the measure as "clearly invalid," the filing states that Measure L is void by "usurping the authority the Legislature has exclusively delegated to the City Council and purporting to impose terms and conditions of employment in a manner contrary to state labor relations."

Service Employees Interna-

tional Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) lost a lawsuit to keep Measure L off the ballot, and then poured at least \$69,000 into defeating it at the ballot box, according to campaign finance reports.

"They're misguided, litigious, and they're making the city spend resources," said Roy Thiele-Sardina, who helped lead Measure L to a successful showing at the ballot box.

Union representatives were not available for comment by the Almanac's deadline. ■

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Residents say new school bells disrupting neighborhood peace

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The bell tones that indicate class breaks over the loudspeakers at Corte Madera Middle School in Portola Valley are different for the 2011-12 school year, as annoyed residents, through a couple of representatives, attested to at the Sept. 14 Town Council meeting.

The tones are of at least two types, are more frequent than usual, are loud enough to be heard beyond the campus and are disrupting the normal daytime peace of nearby neighborhoods, resident Danna Breen told the council.

The Portola Valley School

District essentially concurs and is taking steps, district Superintendent Tim Hanretty told the Almanac.

The council listened to Ms. Breen but did not comment. Under the rules for parliamentary procedure, comments would have been inappropriate since the matter was not on the formal agenda for the evening.

"Everybody is really shaken about this. It's like the Sound of Music. Every class has a sound to which they jump," she said. "I'm telling you it's wildly intrusive."

"Every 15 minutes the bell is ringing twice," she added. "I am speaking on behalf of a lot of

people. We will drag the troops in (to a council meeting) if it doesn't stop soon."

"Bell is not the right word," Jon Silver, a resident and a former mayor, added. "It's more like an ersatz train whistle. It is odd. It is frequent."

"We think it very raucous and needlessly loud," Hartha Hanerfeld, a neighbor of Ms. Breen's, said in a telephone interview. The bells are audible on remote hikes on Coal Mine Ridge and Windy Hill, she said.

"It sounds like a siren," said Tan Oak Drive resident Mary desJardins in a phone interview. "It's auditorially disruptive. I can hear it all day long. What they have right now is like

bad noise pollution. It's a very unpleasant sound."

Robert Pierce, also of Tan Oak Drive, called the bell "an annoying horn or klaxon."

Mr. Silver had recommended, since public school districts are not constrained by zoning laws, that the council try gentle diplomacy but it appears that may not be necessary.

Mr. Hanretty acknowledged the problem in forwarding to the Almanac a recent email message to Town Manager Angie Howard.

The school is perched alone on a hill in a relatively densely populated area of Portola Valley. The school bells were reprogrammed this year to accommodate a new three-part class schedule for fourth- and fifth-graders, for sixth-graders, and for seventh- and eighth-graders, Mr. Hanretty wrote.

"I concur that the tone that was added to accommodate the

third (new) bell schedule is quite shrill," he wrote. "We are working to replace it with something less shrill."

Another problem: the speakers outside the classrooms are supposed to be heard just four times a day — when classes start, at the ends of recess and lunch, and at the end of the day. "At present, it appears that the bells are ringing inside and outside throughout the day," Mr. Hanretty wrote.

"Like so many things these days, we are not able to program the bell system ourselves," Mr. Hanretty continued. "We rely, as so do most schools in this area, on an outside firm to handle changes and adjustments to the system."

The Bay Area has just one firm that services this type of bell system and Portola Valley is in the queue, Mr. Hanretty wrote. The administration is also looking into reducing by half the duration of the ringing. ■

TRAIL

continued from page 5

sity employees who would rather bike to work, Mr. Horton wrote. "Reducing automobile traffic is a major objective of transportation planners."

The county has scheduled two follow-up sessions in Ladera: Thursday, Sept. 29, and Tuesday, Oct. 4. The supervisors are expected to vote on the offer on Oct. 18, Assistant County Manager Dave Holland said. A two-year extension, to December 2013, is available.

A snapshot of reaction

Of the 80 people gathered around about 10 tables for the Sept. 15 session, veterans of 2006 were everywhere. Of the 10 residents sitting at the table attended by the Almanac, nine expressed opposition or significant reservations about Stanford's offer.

Opinion, particularly in Ladera, may shift this time, Mr. Horton said. "There is apprehension in Weekend Acres, but the impacts on Weekend Acres cannot be deter-

mined until there is a proposal and environmental review is conducted," he added.

Indeed, there is apprehension. Weekend Acres residents told stories of long waits in cars to pull out on to busy Alpine Road, and how an improved trail would increase pedestrian and bike traffic and make things worse.

The county, said Weekend Acres resident John Pencavel, should take its lead from Copenhagen, Berlin and Amsterdam when cars and bikes share a road: lower the speed limit to 20 mph and put in speed bumps.

"I feel like I'm caught in the tail of a nightmare," said Barbara Ann Barnett of Weekend Acres. The existing trail is safe and just needs maintenance and a police presence occasionally to reduce speeding, she said. "It worries me (that Stanford requires a continuous trail.) It's their way or the highway."

"The urban nightmare is a fact of life, in my opinion," said Brian Wall of Ladera. "Let's take the (\$10 million) and make the most of it." ■

Portola Valley School District
4575 Alpine Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028

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Any interested parent or community member must complete an application form and a "letter of interest" stating his/her experience in and commitment to educational, youth and community activities.

Application materials may be found in the "Headlines and News" section of the PVSD web site www.pvsd.net or by calling 851-1777, ext. 3001. Completed applications must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on October 7, 2011, and should be sent to:

Tim Hanretty
Superintendent
Portola Valley School District
4575 Alpine Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028

Candidates will be interviewed by the Board during the week of October 10, 2011. Final selection will be made by a majority vote of the Board Members at the regular Board meeting on October 19, 2011. The new trustee will take office at the regularly scheduled Board meeting on December 7, 2011.

For additional information, contact Tim Hanretty at 851-1777, ext. 3000.



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'Barn Dance' set for Oct. 1 in Woodside

The Woodside Recreation Committee hosts its fifth biennial Woodside Barn Dance on Saturday, Oct. 1.

From 3 to 8 p.m., the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy at 880 Runnymede Road will be hopping with a country carnival, carriage and fire engine rides, a pony carousel, petting zoo, animal parade and games.

In addition, Woodside Community Theatre members will be giving a sneak preview of their upcoming show, "South Pacific."

The barbecue dinner featuring tri tip and chicken for adults, and hamburgers and hotdogs for kids, will be served from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Beer and wine will be available for purchase.

Dancing is scheduled from 6 to 8 p.m., with music by the River Rats, the same band that has performed for the last four events.

Tickets must be bought in advance and payment received by Sept. 28. The cost is \$35 for adults, \$20 for children 13 and under, and \$110 for a family of five (two adults and three children 13 and under).

Checks are to be made out to the Town of Woodside, and mailed to P.O. Box 620005, Woodside, CA 94062.

For more information, call 851-3534.

Filoli program features work of Syrie Maugham

"Syrie Maugham: Staging the Glamorous Interior" will be the topic of a talk by author and historian Pauline Metcalf at 2 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 22, at Filoli.

Interior designer Maugham was known for her all-white rooms, which she created for celebrities of the day, in the 1920s and 1930s. Her high-style interiors were also used in movies and theatrical productions. Ms. Maugham was married to renowned writer Somerset Maugham.

After Ms. Metcalf's presentation, there will be a reception, book sale and signing of Ms. Metcalf's book, "Syrie Maugham" (Acanthus Press 2010).

Tickets at \$25 for members, \$30 for non-members, may be purchased online at www.filoli.org or by calling 364-8300, ext. 508.

POLICE CALLS

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

ATHERTON

Fraud report: Children being impersonated on Twitter, Greenoaks Drive, Sept. 12.

MENLO PARK

Theft reports:

■ Loss estimated at \$6,100 in theft of copper wire from construction site, 2900 block of Sand Hill Road, Sept. 13.

■ Loss estimated at \$800 in theft of bike from driveway, Windsor Drive, Sept. 15.

■ Loss estimated at \$472 in theft of cameras, GPS device and wallet from unlocked vehicle, Crane St., Sept. 15.

Fraud report: Loss of \$3,000 after man claiming to be victim's grandson said he

needed money to repair car after accident, Mansion Court, Sept. 12.

Burglary report: Loss estimated at \$2,000 in break-in through bedroom window and theft of laptop computer and ring, Gilbert Ave., Sept. 9.

Child Protective Services report: 300 block of Sharon Park Drive, Sept. 15.

WOODSIDE

Animal cruelty report: Six-month-old goat found mutilated and dismembered on Stillcreek Road after being reported missing from pen on victim's property, Skywood Way, Sept. 9.

Theft reports:

■ Loss estimated at \$10,400 in theft of several pieces of jewelry after house guests left, Moore Road, Sept. 9.

■ Loss estimated at \$300 in theft of bicycle from driveway, Laning Drive, Sept. 11.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Theft report: Unknown loss in theft of Apple iPad from vehicle with slightly open window, 700 block of Portola Road, Sept. 11.

Peninsula Humane Society moves

Dog dorms and cat condos are two features of the Peninsula Humane Society's new home at 1450 Rollins Road in Burlingame, which opened Sept. 10.

"We would joke that our Coyote Point facility (where the shelter had been located) had all the charm of the DMV," said PHS/SPCA spokesman Scott Delucchi. "In all seriousness, the former adoption areas did very little to encourage adoptions or make visitors feel inspired, given the noise, the chain-link kennels, and the way animals were housed side by side, and that was hard to take."

The new three-story facility has been dubbed "the Tom and Annette Lantos Center for Compassion." It was constructed using funds donated largely by Larry and Melanie Ellison and Cyril and Dorothy Fels, with no money coming from the federal government or national animal welfare groups, according to a press release.

The center, which can house up to 200 domestic and 218 wild animals, also includes viewing windows so visitors can watch the staff work to rehabilitate wildlife, hand-feed kittens, and train dogs.



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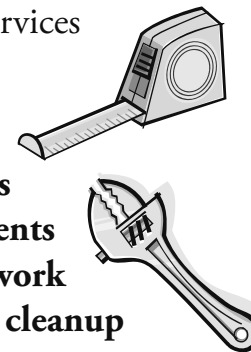
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Seniors take to the runway in 'Pop Heart' fashion show

■ AROUND TOWN

With inspiration derived from the paintings of Andy Warhol, Robert Indiana, and other Pop Art innovators, this year's Sacred Heart Senior Fashion Show is certain to be a spectacle of bold color and high energy. The show, "Pop Heart," is set for Saturday evening, Sept. 24, at the school in Atherton.

Each of Sacred Heart's 150 seniors, and many of the school community's parents, will model fashions from local stores, according to a press release. "Regardless of what they're wearing, each senior is a work of art," says James Everitt, Sacred Heart Prep's principal.

The event will begin with cocktails at 5:30 p.m. in the "Pop Heart" sculpture garden, followed by dinner in the "Gator Art Gallery." The fashion show will follow, with models taking to the runway in styles ranging from casual clothes for teens and adults to formal attire.

"Dance numbers, whimsical props and pop art elements are adding great energy to our show," said event co-chair Valerie Soltau in the press release.

Tickets are \$125 per person. To reserve tickets, buy raffle tickets, or find out about underwriting, contact Lisa Gamitian at 473-4088.

Proceeds from the event will support senior activities and scholarships.

Polo match at Circus Club

Thirty-two men and women — amateur and professional polo players from the Bay Area, Los Angeles and New York — will compete for trophies in the finals of the first Silicon Valley Polo Classic, the ExpertQuote Cup, on Sunday, Sept. 25, at the Menlo Circus Club, 190 Park Lane in Atherton.

Opening ceremonies will begin at 10:30 a.m., with the last match estimated to end at 5 p.m.

The polo match will be engaging off field and on, says tournament director Christine Vermes. The "Stella Stomp," hosted by Stella Artois beers, will see spectators take to the field, libation in hand, to stomp down torn up turf. Local wineries will provide wine tasting.

General admission to the tournament is free. Spectators are encouraged to bring chairs and blankets for seating.

The Menlo Polo Club is hosting the tournament. Founded in 1923, the club, which is based at the Menlo Circus Club, is one of the oldest polo clubs in California. As a member of the United States Polo Association, the club plays as part of the Pacific Coast Circuit, home to 34 clubs with over 525 registered polo players. Visit www.menlopoloclub.com for more information.



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Viewpoint

Ideas, thoughts and opinions about local issues from people in our community. Edited by Tom Gibboney.

Library an opportunity for Atherton

Atherton has a chance to nearly double the size of its tiny library if the City Council has the courage to move ahead with the best option found by a citizen task force that has been working for over two years on the issue.

Of the two options presented, we prefer a new, 11,000-square-foot building in Holbrook-Palmer Park that would be large enough for use as a community center with rooms for meetings, children's story hour and other functions. Such a building

EDITORIAL*The opinion of The Almanac*

would be a tremendous asset for the town, which now offers library services in an 82-year-old building that is in bad need of rehabilitation.

The second, and in our opinion less desirable, option is to simply upgrade the 4,790-square-foot library now in use at Town Center, which would require a seismic retrofit and two more parking places on a site that is cramped and so close to the Caltrain tracks that when trains speed past in either direction all conversation in the library must stop. Despite the building's charm, it makes much more sense to use the site for a future expansion of Town Hall or to house the building department, which now operates out of trailers.

But perhaps the best part of the library proposal is that a new building is virtually paid for already, due to a provision in Proposition 13 that a tiny portion of residential property taxes be set aside to pay for library services. Atherton is part of a county library joint powers authority, and has been watching the town's library fund grow since 1978. It is now worth \$5.6

million and by 2015 will be up to \$8.4 million, just enough to pay for the estimated cost of a new library in the park.

This is great news for Atherton. In a town that just fired its entire Public Works and Building departments so it can out-source the jobs to save money, and which has just agreed to pay a developer more than \$70,000 to settle a lawsuit over a road-impact fee, residents should be thankful that this magnificent improvement can be made with very little additional expense to the town.

More planning needs to be done, but the committee already has determined that razing the park's Main House to make room for the new building will not violate any historic regulations, and that there is adequate parking capacity in the 22-acre park. We believe fears of a huge increase in traffic at the park are unfounded, unless there is a special event scheduled at the library. This would be no different from the traffic drawn to the Pavilion or the Main House for a wedding or other special occasion.

Many critics of building a new library may not understand that the funds are not available for any other use, including passing them on to a school library. Atherton must abide by the rules that come with being a signatory of the regional library joint powers agreement, which say the funds can be used only to support library services for all community members, not just those of a particular school.

We hope more Atherton residents will join those who see the value in adding a much higher quality library facility in Holbrook-Palmer Park. The library would be an asset for the community for years to come.

LETTERS*Our readers write*

A conspiracy to support parking garages?

Editor:

There have been, and continue to be voiced, many complaints about the over-zealous parking crackdown in Menlo Park. This is quite recent, which begs the question "why?"

It is unfortunate to have to become a cynic, but there seems to be no viable alternative. It is hard to interpret this new city activity as anything other than an effort by developers, with the obvious complicity of our supposedly "representative" City Council, to ram through an expensive, complicated, and mostly unwanted, reconfiguring of our town, most particularly adding parking structures that people can use for extended parking in order to avoid these parking fines. (Yes, I know it is officially a city, but we, the residents feel it is our "town".

Hotels? Apartments whose tenants will fill up the parking structures meant to relieve nonexistent parking problems? Street closures for unneeded and absurd mini-parks? Businesses



Atherton Heritage Association/Julie Bennett

Our Regional Heritage

Marcia Elias entertains young Atherton residents during a 1989 story time in the library.

harmed by years-long construction?

The City Council was elected to represent the wishes of its residents. Therefore, this issue must be presented to the residents of Menlo Park for a vote.

**Mimi Kugushev
San Mateo Drive, Menlo Park**

Clever maneuvers to 'sell' Atherton a library

Editor:

If I were a builder/developer specializing in libraries, wouldn't I be angling to include in my portfolio a state of the art facility in a beautiful park setting? In today's down

economy? In Atherton? You bet.

As it happens, as a professional member of the American Society of Interior Designers, I am familiar with the critical process of listening carefully to the wishes and needs of clients. If the "client" is the dedi-

See **LETTERS**, next page

Update on Regional Heritage photo

The mystery photographer of the beautiful collie sitting patiently near the windmill on Portola Road has been solved by Jeanne Ladley, who let us know that "Robbie" used to wait at the bus stop near the windmill for her to come home from school. Jeanne is the daughter of the late Walter and Zelda Jelich, longtime residents of Portola Valley. Thanks Jeanne.

The Editor

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

cated Atherton Library Building Steering Committee, perhaps that is happening.

If the "client" is the taxpaying community, I submit that clever maneuvers are being employed to circumvent the general consensus of this community by imposing a formulaic over-the-top facility at Holbrook-Palmer Park, the "preferred" site (stated in print).

Concurrently, the national, state and local economies are severely stressed, the public school in our town, Selby Lane, has a library desperate for books, reference materials and a librarian, the high-speed railroad is lurking, and information technology is changing with lightening speed. If we pause, truly listen and reflect, we have an opportunity as well as an obligation to build a facility which will serve our community well while preserving Holbrook Palmer Park for recreation as stipulated in Olive Holbrook Palmer's will.

Stuart Awbrey
Rittenhouse Avenue,
Atherton

Saltworks developer should abandon project

Editor:

The developers' plans for the Saltworks project in Redwood City should be abandoned now. Why?

Recently they abrogated their commitment to traffic mitigation by eliminating vehicular traffic on one of three ingress/egress points which will severely impact Highway 101 and surface street traffic. Earlier it was announced their plan to bring water in from Kern County isn't supported by the two water agencies that would have to approve it.

This site should be returned to baylands. The only good thing about this project is the jobs it has created for all the consultants and DMB, the developer. I guess that's something.

The rules that will guide Atherton library decision

By Denise Kupperman

A recent article in the Almanac covered many salient points about the proposed new Atherton Library. While the article was in general balanced in its effort to provide information, some statements need clarification, especially those concerning the terms of the agreement between the San Mateo County Library Joint Powers Authority (JPA) and the Town of Atherton.

Given the importance of this project and its potential to bring the community together in building a lasting place to delight, engage, learn and inspire, it is essential to share and provide the community accurate factual information about the project. We encourage residents to contact the Atherton Library Steering Committee, or refer to the San Mateo County Library website: smcl.org, or attend one of the committee's regular meetings.

All members of the San Mateo Library system contribute a predetermined portion of their residential property taxes, approximately 3.2 cents per \$100 of assessed property, to support library services. This proportion was established in 1978 with the Passage of Proposition 13.

If the cost to provide basic library services within a jurisdiction is less than the property tax collected and attributable to funding

basic library services, the member jurisdiction generating the funds holds the excess, defined as the Library Donor City Fund. Currently the Town of Atherton has accumulated \$5.6 million in its Library Donor City Fund, and we can reasonably expect to continue accumulating additional excess funds annually. These funds are restricted for library purposes only and can only be spent on library related activities such as facility maintenance, construction, technology, expanding library collections and library programs.

In accordance with the terms of the JPA, this library fund cannot directly fund school libraries. Library funds are to be used for providing library services for all community members. School libraries, while essential to our community, serve a distinct population and are not available to all. The JPA and the Atherton library can and does, however, participate in outreach programs that enhance the public school libraries (all done in accordance with the terms of the JPA).

The Atherton City Council established the Atherton Library Steering Committee (ALBSCi) in August 2010. The committee was to build on the work performed by the Atherton Library Task Force. After many months of study, with the direction of the

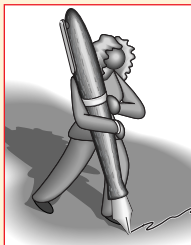
City Council, numerous open committee meetings, three community workshops, and the efforts of expert professional consultants, city staff involvement and thousands of hours of volunteer time, the steering committee is preparing to present its recommendation to the Atherton City Council.

Despite its physical limitations, the current Atherton Library has seen an average increase in visits and usage over the last five years, as have the majority of American libraries.

Service area population is only one of many factors that determine the size of a library. The types of services, collections and programs desired by the community and the changes taking place in technology and the delivery of library services are equally important. The size of the Atherton branch library service area, as noted in the recent Almanac article, has been consistent for many years. Types of spaces and library size will be studied and evaluated with the JPA and community throughout the process.

Few contemporary institutions have the ability or incentive to nurture ideas of all kinds, regardless of commercial value. Libraries will continue to optimize and facilitate lifelong learning and inquiry, regardless of whether that information is packaged as a book or in the Cloud.

Denise Kupperman is a member of the Atherton Library Steering Committee



**GUEST
OPINION**



Isabel Marant
Vanessa Bruno
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