



**Jury hears opening arguments
in Woodside murder case**

The Almanac

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SRI starts a phased modernization
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Jury hears opening arguments in Woodside murder case

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

The jury is now into its second week of the trial of Pooroushasb "Peter" Parineh, the Woodside man accused of the April 2010 murder of his wife at their mansion on Fox Hill Road.

Mr. Parineh, a 65-year-old commercial real estate investor, is charged with premeditated murder for financial gain. In San Mateo County jail since June 2010, and facing life in prison or the death penalty if convicted, Mr. Parineh wore a dark suit for his presence in the courtroom of Superior Court Judge Lisa Novak.

Over three hours on Thursday, April 25, attorneys for the prosecution and the defense outlined the evidence they plan to use in making their cases in the trial ahead, complete with graphic photographs and the anguished audio of a 911 call. The trial will likely unfold over weeks. In introducing himself, Redwood City defense attorney Dek Ketchum noted that jurors will hear from the prosecution's witnesses first and that it may be two weeks before witnesses for the defense take the stand.

The essential question in the case: Could 56-year-old Parima Parineh have committed suicide in her bed by shooting herself in the head with a 0.38-caliber handgun and, failing to die, take two more shots — one that missed and one that delivered a grazing wound to her head — and then take a fourth shot that ended her life?

No, said Deputy District Attorney Jeff Finigan. Mr. Parineh planned and carried out the death of his wife, whose life had been insured for a total of \$30 million, to rescue himself from "extreme financial difficulties," including foreclosures, Mr. Finigan said. In the year leading up to his wife's death, Mr. Parineh had been trying without success to stem the crippling erosion



Courtesy San Mateo County Sheriff's Office

The murder trial of Pooroushasb "Peter" Parineh, a Woodside resident, is in its second week in a Redwood City courtroom. Prosecutors allege that Mr. Parineh killed his highly insured wife, Parima Parineh, in April 2010 after failing to slow the steep deterioration in value of his real estate holdings.

of his income and the value of his real estate holdings, and the failing confidence of his lenders once they learned of his plight, Mr. Finigan said.

On the day after his wife's death, Mr. Parineh had inquired about submitting a \$26 million claim against one of his wife's insurance policies, Mr. Finigan noted. A complicating factor: that policy had been placed in a trust managed by the couple's three adult children, with whom Mr. Parineh did not get along. (In April 2012, his two sons, Austiag Hormoz Parineh and Khashayar Parineh, and his daughter, Austiag Parineh, filed a wrongful death lawsuit against their father.)

Physical evidence

After describing Mr. Parineh's severe financial situation, Mr.

Finigan introduced some of the physical evidence investigators had turned up, including:

■ Investigators for the prosecution found gunshot residue — the cloud of microscopic particles a gun ejects when being fired — on Mr. Parineh's left hand, shirt, vest, T-shirt and trousers.

■ Investigators found reason to suspect the blood stains on the comforter covering Ms. Parineh's body and on the gun as it lay on the bed under her hand. The blood had not landed on those items in a way consistent with a suicide, but had been stained after the fact from contact with a bloody surface, Mr. Finigan said.

■ The stippling pattern of gun powder where the bullets entered Ms. Parineh's body showed that the gun had not been pressed against her skin.

■ A coroner determined that Ms. Parineh had been dead several hours before Mr. Parineh's 911 call. The prosecution's interpretation of Mr. Parineh's locations that day, based on his cell phone record, showed that he could have been at home at the time of death.

In defense, Mr. Ketchum countered some of the prosecution's points:

■ The gunshot residue on Mr. Parineh's clothing was weeks old, acquired when he carried the gun to a firing range and had packed his clothes in that same gym bag. Furthermore, his wife's forearms were heavily dusted with gunshot residue consistent with someone unfamiliar with holding a gun and using both hands when firing it. The fallen position of the gun on the bed was also consistent with this scenario, Mr. Ketchum said.

■ Using crime scene reconstruction and analysis, defense investigators concluded that the blood distribution at the scene

See **ON TRIAL**, page 6

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SRI: The 25-year plan

After a decade-long wait, SRI starts a phased modernization of its Menlo Park campus

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

From small beginnings in 1946, the SRI campus in Menlo Park has grown to 38 buildings sprawled over 63 acres. Along the way the nonprofit research facility helped develop products and technologies that are now commonplace such as the computer mouse and more recently, the Siri virtual personal assistant loaded into Apple's iPhones.

Now SRI is preparing to renovate its headquarters in four phases. At the end of the 25-year plan, the campus will retain the same total floor area of 1.4 million square feet, but have 800 fewer parking spaces, up to 1,700 more employees, and more landscaping.

"We have more asphalt on this campus right now than we need. One of the nice things in our plans is that we're going to be increasing the landscape by 37 percent, which is huge," said Tom Little, SRI's director of support operations.

The campus at 333 Ravenswood Ave. sits between Middlefield Road and Laurel Street. Thirty-three buildings will come down, replaced by 13, which will include five standing

48 feet high on the west side of the campus, one 56 feet tall and three at 64 feet high on the east side. Total floor space would remain 11 percent under the maximum allowed by SRI's conditional development permit.

About 80 percent of the current buildings — a mix of offices, labs and research and development facilities — were built during the 1940s and 1950s, according to Mr. Little.

"Basically SRI has been living here for about the last 65 years," he said. "It's way past time that we rebuild our corporate home."

It's been a long time coming. SRI first planned a renovation about 10 years ago, then pulled back after its resources shrank in the wake of the dot-com implosion. Then 9/11 ushered in stricter security requirements and a new CEO decided to shift the company's business model.

"So we withdrew our application," Mr. Little said. "At the time, we had a handshake agreement with city leadership that they really wanted us to have a master plan for the campus so they could have insight into our long-range plans and enhance the city's ability to forecast development."

The new facilities will have improved labs for the engineer-



Photo courtesy of SRI

An aerial photo of the SRI campus in 1958. About 80 percent of the buildings and laboratories at the nonprofit research facility were built more than 55 years ago.

ing and science divisions of SRI, as well as a layout that will encourage collaboration.

Heyward Robinson, a former Menlo Park councilman who works at SRI, sounded like he's looking forward to the changes. "Our current campus is pretty outdated," he said. "I'm in a building constructed in the 1940s. Although it and similar buildings still serve our needs, they require a team of maintenance personnel to patch the leaky roofs, fix rattling fans, keep offices from becoming too hot or too cold, etc. We are also pretty spread out."

He said he'll also be glad to see the campus become more "green" with more energy-efficient buildings, natural lighting and if feasible, rooftop solar panels.

The renovations carry a price tag of \$400 million to \$500 million in today's dollars. Mr. Little said the company will pay for the renovations through bonds, cash and mortgage financing.

SRI will start construction on a plot of vacant land and abandoned buildings on the rear eastern side of its campus. All contractors will park on campus and access the site via

Middlefield Road, according to Mr. Little, but there won't be a constant flow of work going on. "It gets back to having to live and work here while we do this," he said. "At any one time, there will be one, no more than two, buildings going up. Then there'll be times that three or four years go by and there's no construction activity at all."

One of the nice things in our plans is that we're going to be increasing the landscape by 37 percent

TOM LITTLE, SRI'S DIRECTOR OF SUPPORT OPERATIONS.

Concerns raised at lightly attended neighborhood outreach meetings held in March included the perennial Menlo Park issues — traffic and noise. But not just noise expected from construction, but also noise experienced now. Mr. Little said SRI has since been working on tracking down the source of the problem.

As for traffic, SRI hopes to get even more employees participat-

ing in its transportation demand management program. The company said that right now, about 41 percent get to work without driving alone in their cars.

How to coordinate the development with other large projects expected in Menlo Park, such as Menlo Gateway and the Stanford-Arrillaga development, remains to be decided after the environmental impact report is finished, according to Associate Planner Rachel Grossman.

Mr. Little said that SRI's modernization should have little cumulative impact with regards to other projects. "From the EIR and a good year of design work to physically create the drawing sets (and getting) building permits ... we're probably three years away from starting construction on anything." Stanford's development may be done by then, and noted that the time frame for Menlo Gateway's construction remains impossible to predict.

Menlo Park will negotiate a development agreement with SRI. City staff said the project will need to go through an environmental impact review and financial impact analysis. ▀



Renderings courtesy of SRI

Above and on the cover: A site schematic and simulated street-level view depict what SRI's Menlo Park campus will look like at the completion of its 25-year modernization project, if all goes according to plan.

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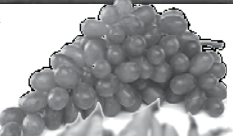



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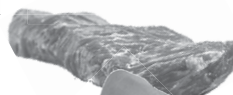


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Stanford offers lease deal to Menlo Park residents

Stanford is offering a lease-extension proposal to Menlo Park residents in the Stanford Hills and Stanford Creek neighborhoods who are leasing their land from Stanford. The university's purpose is to "eventually transition the properties into (the university's) faculty-housing program over an extended period of time," Jean McCown, Stanford's community relations director, said in a news release April 24.

"The availability of single-family housing in desirable neighborhoods is critical to the university's faculty recruitment in a competitive market," she said in the news release.

The offer is being made to 123 leaseholders of 78 single-family homes in Stanford Hills and 45 homes in Stanford Creek. Both neighborhoods are located off Sand Hill Road. Stanford Creek borders San Francisco Creek. Stanford Hills is next to the Stanford foothills.

The lease agreements on these homes are due to expire in 38

years in Stanford Creek and in 45 years in Stanford Hills.

Leaseholders who sign the offer will get a free 10-year extension of the lease and the right to extend the leases further for a fee. In return, when the leaseholders decide to sell their properties, they will give Stanford "the first chance to purchase the leasehold at market rates," Ms. McCown said.

Stanford's goal in buying the properties is to add them to the university's faculty housing program, which currently covers homes on the Stanford campus. Under the program, only eligible faculty members can buy the properties.

Stanford hand-delivered packages with its offer on Wednesday to the Stanford Hills and Stanford Creek leaseholders, and offered to meet with them personally to answer questions. The offer will remain open until Oct. 31, the university said.

The university's 1885 founding grant prohibits the sale of university land.

ON TRIAL

continued from page 3

could be consistent with a suicide, based on the order of the shots fired and the wounds they caused.

■ The cell phone record showing Mr. Parineh's whereabouts on the day of his wife's death is open to interpretation, Mr. Ketchum said, wielding a map about the size of an uncut piece of plywood showing points of reference that he said he plans to use during the trial.

Wife was depressed

Ms. Parineh, a stay-at-home mom, had a history of depression and a previous suicide attempt via an overdose of drugs, Mr. Ketchum said, adding: "The greatest predictor of a suicide is a previous suicide attempt."

While women tend not to use guns to kill themselves, 30 percent of the time they do, he said. Statistics also show that 1.6 percent to 8 percent of suicides involve multiple gunshot wounds. "Although it's not common to find multiple gunshot wounds to the head, it's

not rare either," Mr. Ketchum said.

The family had been used to luxury — Mr. Parineh's real estate had been valued at between \$50 million and \$70 million in 2006 — but the couple had recently been arguing over whether their children should have to find their own ways financially, Mr. Ketchum said. Creditors had been calling up to 10 times a day, and Ms. Parineh saw suicide as a way to provide a financially secure future for her children, Mr. Ketchum said.

The most dramatic moment in the courtroom that day was Mr. Ketchum's replay of continuous crying on the phone by Mr. Parineh as the 911 dispatcher was trying to get details of the situation. Mr. Parineh's answers to the dispatcher's questions were unintelligible. After at least five minutes of crying, by which point the dispatcher said the medics were at his front door, the call came to an end with a dial tone.

Occasionally during the replay, the judge looked over at Mr. Parineh, whose neutral expression did not appear to change. ■

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Almanac wins statewide awards

The Almanac won five statewide awards in the annual California Newspaper Publishers Association contest, the CNPA announced April 27. The Almanac won first place in its circulation category for best feature story and second places in these categories: investigative reporting, coverage of the environment, photo essay and feature photo.

Almanac News Editor Renee Batti won a first-place award in the "best feature story" category for her story on World War II veteran and Menlo Park resident Carl Clark, who was commended by the Navy in 2012 for saving lives in 1945, when the ship USS Aaron Ward was struck by kamikaze planes. He said he accepted the honor, 66 years after the attack, on behalf of those who fought bravely for their country but, because they were black like him, "got very little recognition for what they did." Photos were

by Michelle Le.

Almanac reporter Sandy Brundage won second place in the "best investigative reporting" category for her November 2011 story that uncovered how the Menlo Park police department used red-light camera citations, known as "snitch tickets," to coerce car owners into identifying drivers photographed by the camera. The tickets falsely implied that recipients were legally obligated to identify the drivers.

She disclosed that police repeatedly called workplaces and landlords in an attempt to force the recipients to identify drivers, and made false threats, suggesting the police could prevent renewal of vehicle registrations. As part of a new state law, police departments are now no longer allowed to use snitch tickets.

Almanac reporter Dave Boyce won a second-place award in the "coverage of the environment"

category for his story on a significant increase in recycling by local residents, and what happens to all those recycled materials. Photos were by Michelle Le.

Almanac photographer Michelle Le won a second-place award in the photo essay category for a photo spread that included a story by Dave Boyce: "A contemplative life: Monks at Woodside Priory take the road less traveled."

She also won a second-place award in the category, "best feature photo," for a 2012 photograph of a regal equestrian costumed in medieval garb and riding through the mist during a Camelot-themed "Day of the Horse" event in Woodside.

Michelle Le also won a certificate of achievement for a news photo that placed in the top 10 percent of entries statewide.

Visit tinyurl.com/CNPA-427 for links to the stories and photos.

Resident agrees to \$75,000 penalty for felling trees without a permit

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

Portola Valley resident David L. Douglass has agreed to pay a penalty of \$75,000 to head off a potential lawsuit from the town over the felling, without a permit, of at least 18 trees on a lightly forested hilltop on his undeveloped property on Redberry Ridge.

Because the trees were located within an open-space easement on his property, the town was allowed to seek damages "for the value of the trees and the loss of scenic value," Town Attorney Sandy Sloan said in an email.

Leigh Prince, an attorney and an assistant to Ms. Sloan, announced the settlement following a closed-session meeting of the Town Council on April 24. The vote was 4-0, Mayor John Richards said. Councilman Ted Driscoll recused himself from the decision because his work brings him into occasional contact with Mr. Douglass, he said.

Mr. Douglass faces additional expenses of \$150,345 to have the hillside replanted and then maintained over the next five years, Town Planner Tom Vlastic said. Of that total, \$52,625 would cover the cost of planting replacement trees and other vegetation, Mr. Vlastic said.

The planting is to be completed this spring, Mr. Vlastic told the Almanac. The town's Architectural & Site Control Commission will review the situation in October to see if the

replanting is going as intended.

If so, the ASCC would be prepared to recommend to the council to lift the municipal code violation now applied to the property and allow Mr. Douglass' construction plans to move forward, Mr. Vlastic said.

Settlement negotiations were "fairly quick," Ms. Prince said. The town made an initial offer for a penalty, Mr. Douglass made a counter-offer, and the town accepted it, she said. The amount of the town's initial offer is confidential, but it was higher than \$75,000, Ms. Prince said.

The trees were taken down in late December or early January, and the town first learned of the situation in January, according to staff reports. Fifteen of the trees were "significant" and consisted of 10 oaks, four bay laurels and one madrone, Mr. Vlastic said.

Several bay laurels on the adjacent property, owned in common by residents of the Blue Oaks subdivision, had had their tops lopped off. Asked if this was part of the same incident, Mr. Vlastic said that "no one else was down there doing anything but his crew."

The municipal code categorizes trees by species, many of which become significant to the town when their diameters reach 11.5 inches.

The ASCC visited the site in March for a presentation by the landscape architects engaged by Mr. Douglass to replant the hillside.

About a dozen oaks will be planted soon, with underbrush and grass coming in December, according to an ASCC staff report and remarks during the on-site tour by Paul Kephart, president of Monterey-based landscape architect Rana Creek. ■

Correction

An April 11, 2012, story in the Almanac incorrectly stated that Rasheed Brooks, then a Menlo Park resident, had pleaded no-contest to one count of child molestation when he actually pleaded no-contest to one count of child abuse. While Mr. Brooks was initially charged with both misdemeanor molestation of

a child under 18 and with felony child abuse, the molestation charge was dropped as part of a plea agreement. In addition, the original online story incorrectly said he was required to undergo mental health counseling. He was required to complete a one-year child abuser counseling program. The Almanac regrets the errors.



REAL ESTATE TRENDS

by Samia Cullen

What's Driving the Rise in Home Prices?

Our local real estate market is seeing significant year-over-year gains. While there are many factors behind the rise in home prices, the big price drivers are:

1. Improving economy and stable employment. Employees are feeling more secure in their jobs with the improving economy and the easing of the European financial crisis.

2. Low interest rates. According to some economists, today's low rates give buyers 30% more buying power. This is attracting buyers who wish to get into the market before interest rates go up.

3. Inventories of homes for sale are at low levels. Our local market has a limited supply of new homes due to the lack of vacant land. Most of our inventory is coming from home owners who are realizing the benefit of moving up or taking advantage of economic conditions to cash out on the equity in their properties.

4. Immigration and influx of foreign skilled workers. The need for skilled workers in Silicon Valley has resulted in many immigrants from China, India and other foreign countries coming to our area. These immigrants have increased in number recently and constitute a significant percentage of buyers in our area.

5. Increase in real estate investment. Foreign and local investors are pouring cash into the real estate market and are a major contributor to rising home prices. The loss of confidence in the stock market has motivated many individuals to diversify their investments and invest in the local real estate, which over time has proven to be a more secure investment and a hedge against inflation.

6. The rise in rents. Increasing rents has prompted more investors to purchase properties to rent out and more renters to second guess why they are paying so much in rent when they could buy.

If you have a real estate question or would like a free market analysis for your home, please call me at 650-384-5392, Alain Pinel Realtors, or email me at scullen@apr.com. For the latest real estate news, follow my blog at www.samiacullen.com

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Residents tell Menlo council to get employee costs under control

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Menlo Park City Council members said they wanted to hear what the public thinks about matters they should consider during upcoming labor negotiations. They got what they asked for in spades on April 23 when about a dozen speakers, some representing multiple residents, addressed issues that included possible outsourcing of services, the level of pay for city staff, and the generosity of employee benefits.

The meeting was a first for Menlo Park: an opportunity for residents to make their views about employee compensation and other contract matters known before the city begins labor talks with each of its employee groups. All city employee contracts expire this year, with police officers' and sergeants' contracts ending in June.

Councilman Ray Mueller, responding to residents' requests to have a public discussion of the issue, organized the meeting, which was held in the council chambers just before the council met in closed session to confer about pending negotiations with the two police employee unions.

Among the speakers were the three men who led the successful pension-reduction Measure L campaign in 2010 — Roy Thiele-Sardina, Henry Riggs and Edward Moritz.

Mr. Thiele-Sardina, who was also speaking for residents

including former councilwoman Lee Duboc, cited a list of concerns, including the number of city employees. The staffing equivalent of 230 full-time people "is a number most of us think is way too high," he said.

Mr. Riggs' suggestions ranged from a hiring freeze and the outsourcing of some services to considering higher employee contributions to their pension and health-care benefits.

In the past 10 years, average per-employee costs increased 79 percent.

He and several other speakers advocated having independent parties, including "taxpayer citizens," on the team representing the city in negotiations. Because the city's negotiators are also staff members, "it is now commonly known that all members of the negotiating team stand to benefit when benefits are increased," he said in a written statement, much of which he read from the podium.

Although Measure L addressed only non-police employees, reducing the pension benefits of staff members hired after the measure passed, Mr. Moritz said it's time to deal with police pension benefits, which are significantly higher than non-safety

workers' and are the "major driver" of the city's skyrocketing pension costs.

Hank Lawrence and several other speakers urged the council to consider switching pension plans from a defined benefit system, in which employees are guaranteed a specific amount of income after retirement, to a defined contribution plan such as a 401(k).

Chuck Bernstein recommended that the council freeze compensation and benefits until the city has a clearer understanding of its financial picture, particularly regarding its employee costs. "Personnel costs are increasing faster than revenues," he said. "The city doesn't have the financial expertise to understand these things."

He recommended that the city bring in a financial expert who would report directly to the City Council.

As with cities across the state, Menlo Park must come to grips with a multimillion-dollar unfunded liability resulting from post-retirement benefits. Complicating matters is that the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS), which manages public employee pensions, is likely to increase the financial contributions required of cities, in part to make up for investment losses in recent years.

City employees had one advocate speaking on their behalf: Rene Morales of the Service Employees' International Union



Carving Magic

"Reborn" is one of the carved ceramic creations by Misako Kambe that will be on display at the Portola Art Gallery in the Allied Arts Guild, 75 Arbor Road in Menlo Park, during May. A reception for the artist will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 4. The exhibit, "Carving Magic," includes ceramic artwork using three methods: line carving, relief carving and erosion. After using one of these three methods, the artist then applies celadon glazes or uses natural wood firing or wood-soda firing techniques to add variation.

(SEIU), Local 521, which represents the majority of city staff. Mr. Morales warned the council that employees are under much stress because of current staffing levels, and existing work conditions have resulted in failed recruitment efforts.

He noted that outsourcing services can be more costly in the long run because outside employees don't have the institutional knowledge of the city and the workplace, and often won't have the personal commitment to the job that permanent staff members have.

Councilman Mueller noted at the beginning of the meeting that council members couldn't indicate support of speakers' opinions, or make commitments to a course of action, because doing so could be construed as bad-faith negotiations with employee groups. But he said giving residents a chance to participate in the process was crucial for government transparency and accountability, and he hopes the practice "will be adopted by future councils."

Although restricted in what they could say, several council members signaled their concern about specific matters by asking questions of city staff and the city attorney. Those issues included workers' compensation, disability, and binding arbitration, which in at least one recent case allowed a fired police officer to reclaim his job.

After the meeting, Mr. Mueller told the Almanac that in recent months some residents

expressed an interest to him in a public dialogue on employee contracts. But as the council prepared to discuss contract issues in closed session, he was frustrated that there had been no meeting scheduled specifically to encourage members of the community to state their views, he said.

He began working to organize an unofficial meeting where the community would be invited to comment, but that developed into an official council meeting after more than two council members said they wanted to attend, he said.

Although many speakers at the meeting thanked Mr. Mueller for organizing the session, he later said: "I appreciate the thanks I got, but I do feel that I don't need to be thanked. I'm a public elected official and ... I don't think it was asking a lot of me to schedule a meeting."

Also, he said, it gave him a chance, as a new council member, to learn more about what is important to residents, and about the issues the council will have to consider in approving new employee contracts.

The staff report prepared before the meeting shows that employee costs represent 71.6 percent of the general fund budget. "It is projected that increases in personnel costs will continue," according to the report.

In the 10 years from fiscal year 2002-03 to 2012-13, the average per-employee cost increased by 79 percent — from \$79,900 to \$142,700, the report says. ■

Project Read needs more tutors

For 27 years, Project Read-Menlo Park has been helping adults improve their reading and writing. At present, 60 tutors are matched with adults. However, many more are needed, according to Roberta Roth, library outreach specialist.

The next session of tutor training for Project Read begins Tuesday, May 7, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m., at the Menlo Park Library,

800 Alma St. in Menlo Park.

The second session runs from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, May 11. The final part of the training, on Wednesday, June 12, is a meeting for tutors who have started working regularly with students.

For more information, email Alice Bradshaw at aabradshaw@menlopark.org or call Project Read-Menlo Park at 330-2525.

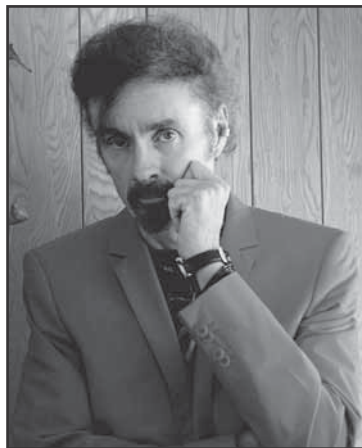


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Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

In April 2012, Ernesto Marin, a firefighter/paramedic with the Redwood City Fire Department, went through the motions of fighting a wildfire behind Christ Episcopal Church in Portola Valley. A replay of the wildfire drill for 2013 is coming to Woodside on Friday, May 3.

Wildfire drill comes to Woodside

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

There will be hurrying fire trucks on Woodside's roads on Friday, May 3, as well as a patrolling helicopter or two in the air as members of the Woodside Fire Protection District and other firefighting agencies in San Mateo County take part in a day-long annual woodland fire drill. Portola Valley was the host for the 2012 exercise.

The imaginary wildfire will be "large" and "aggressive" and include three imaginary fire locations: at Marva Oaks Drive along Canada Road at the northern end of town, at Albion Drive just west of downtown, and further west on the grounds of the Mounted Patrol of San Mateo County on Kings Mountain Road, accord-

ing to Woodside district Fire Marshal Denise Enea.

The Menlo Country Club on Woodside Road just east of Interstate 280 will serve as the staging area for equipment and firefighters, Ms. Enea said. Also participating will be Town Hall staff, the county Office of Emergency Services, and deputies from the county Sheriff's Office. The drill begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m.

"Wildland fire has remained a constant threat over the years to our native brush filled hillsides," Ms. Enea said in a statement. "The Fire District urges residents of Woodside, Portola Valley and the neighboring unincorporated neighborhoods to create defensible space around their property and look for ways to improve their

homes ignition resistance."

The fire district recommends keeping roofs and the underside of decks clear of leaf debris, and replacing combustible wood-shake roofs with non-combustible metal, slate or composition materials. Noncombustible siding and deck surfaces are another important step to consider when making remodeling plans, Ms. Enea said.

Go to tinyurl.com/Prevent-fire-13 for more information on fire prevention in Woodside.

Go to firesafesanmarco.org for even more.

Go to cerpp.org for information on the services provided by the local volunteers for the crisis management group Citizens Emergency Response Preparedness Program. ▀

Mother of Joan Baez dies at 100

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Woodside resident Joan Chandos Baez, the mother of famed folk singer and Woodside resident Joan Baez, died at home on April 20, just a few days after her 100th birthday, her daughter Joan said on joanbaez.com

Some 50 friends and family members had gathered at the Baez home to celebrate her mother's birthday. There were balloons and spring flowers and singing, of course, with an audience that included chickens and oak trees and the denizens of the creek down the hill.

Joan Bridge was a native of Edinburgh, Scotland, and met her husband Albert Baez at

a high school dance after the Bridge family moved to Madison, New Jersey, according to VintageVinylNews.com. The couple had three children: Pauline, Joan and Mimi (Farina).

Among the highlights of their lives together, VintageVinylNews.com reported that the "two Joans" were arrested after helping to block a doorway into a U. S. Air Force induction center in Oakland in October 1967, a time when American involvement in the Vietnam War was escalating.



Joan Chandos Baez

The web posting includes a message, "When I Join the Heavenly Band," said to be composed by her mother.

"Friends who want to celebrate my new adventure, please gather round. Don't grieve, for it's only a worn out body that's leaving and the memory of any sad times goes with it. The good memories are in my spirit and my spirit is with you today. I'm in your midst, for there's nothing more valuable to me than to be with you, my beloved family and my gracious friends.

"Take a moment for silence and wish me well. I'll hear you. Then make the bottles pop. You know I love champagne almost as much as I love you!"

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Woodside council hits back hard on felling trees without a permit

■ Property owner fined \$26,250 for cutting down six trees

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

It isn't the first five-figure penalty the Woodside Town Council has assessed on a property owner for felling mature trees without first obtaining a \$50 permit, but at \$26,250, it is the largest since establishing

the penalties in 2007.

The property owner, Rajiv Gujral, may be refunded up to \$16,250 with evidence of having spent the amount requested to begin rehabilitating the small forest on his three acres on Jane Drive. The forest has been ignored and is in need of much more care than \$16,000 can buy, said Councilman and general contractor Dave Tanner, an opinion shared by arborist Kevin Kielty, who testified on

Mr. Gujral's behalf.

Woodside's municipal code specifies a fine of \$52,500 for felling six "significant" trees, but council members, as they have done for similar cases in recent years, said the full penalty would have been too stiff. Councilman Tom Shanahan suggested halving the penalty and including a partial refund. The council agreed on a 6-0 vote, with Councilman Ron Romines absent.

Mr. Gujral said he had been badly advised on felling bay laurel trees, notorious for their capacity to harbor sudden oak death (SOD) microbes. None of the nearby oaks had been harmed, he said. "I'm asking for leniency from the town," he said. "I'm appealing to your good nature."

Resident Susan Poletti called the \$52,500 penalty "despicable" and harangued the council. "Each one of you was voted by your neighbors to represent

them. That (U.S.) flag represents our government. That flag represents our individuality. That flag represent our idea that individual rights matter in this country ... the fact that our rights come from our creator. ... Those are [Mr. Gujral's] trees. He bought and paid for that property. He bought and paid for those trees."

Woodside resident Debbie

See **WOODSIDE TREES**, page 16



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Portola Valley green-lights farmers' market plan

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The Portola Valley Town Council has given its consent to proceed with plans for an eight-week trial run of a weekly Thursday afternoon farmers' market in Portola Valley.

The market would tentatively run from 3 to 7 p.m. with as few as 15 or as many as 25 booths, said Brandi de Garneau, a member of the town staff who

coordinates initiatives on sustainable living. She spoke at the council's April 24 meeting.

Ms. de Garneau said in an interview that she will be talking with potential market managers and she plans to bring the council a formal proposal on May 8. If approved, a Thursday market could get going two to four weeks later, but may take longer depending on her schedule, she said. A progress report would come after six weeks.

As with markets in Woodside, this one would be relatively small and carry locally grown organic produce and some locally prepared foods such as hummus and chocolate truffles. There could be some live music to create an atmosphere, but no food trucks "for now"—a concession to Roberts Market, the Portola Deli and the Parkside Grille restaurant, Ms. de Garneau said. Those merchants may want to consider

specials tuned to market day, she added.

A booth staffed by members of some of the 16 volunteer town committees would be there to encourage civic participation in town affairs. Nicole Pasini, the manager of the public library in town, said she hopes the market would increase traffic at the library.

The market would be professionally managed and would be in keeping with a green agenda for the town, Ms. de Garneau said. With locally grown organic produce, it would help advance Portola Valley's sustainability initiatives and could encourage merchants in town to sell more organic produce, she said.

Support was plentiful, but not universal. Residents Laura Stec and Brook Coffee, two of the moving forces behind the idea, explained some of their enthusiasm. Children are overweight and people have lost their kitchen skills, Ms. Stec said. "We are a community of people who need to get back into the kitchen," she said. "Most people don't even know how to sharpen a knife."

The music would be on the quiet side, Ms. Coffee said. An a capella group of singing children, for example, or a solitary banjo or mandolin.

Ms. Coffee said she frequents the Sunday Menlo Park farmers' market but, complaining about having to drive out of town, she held up a half-gallon canning jar filled with an unidentified

tea-colored liquid. "In my Prius, I still use half a gallon of gas," she said. "That makes me nauseous."

Broccoli and kale can induce children to claim they feel nauseated, but not her kids. Ms. Coffee said she hears from parents amazed that her children sometimes bring broccoli to snack on.

As for the approximately 20 opponents who showed up, they were vocal but limited to the Family Farm/Hidden Valley neighborhood that is part of Woodside and within hearing distance of Town Center. Traffic and parking were concerns as was noise and interference with equestrian activities. The big question: Why do it at all?

"I object strenuously to the farmers' market. I don't think we need a farmers' market every two miles," said Hidden Valley resident Lynn Lane Jacobson, referring to the Woodside markets, Webb Ranch and the produce sections of Roberts Market and Bianchini's Market in Ladera. "What local farms? Who are the farmers? ... If you want to socialize, go to the Town Hall and socialize where you won't make noise. ... I see no use for this. You have enough farmers' markets."

"I think it's really important that we carefully weigh the pros and cons," said another Hidden Valley resident. "I think it's possible that people outside of Portola Valley would come to this market." ■

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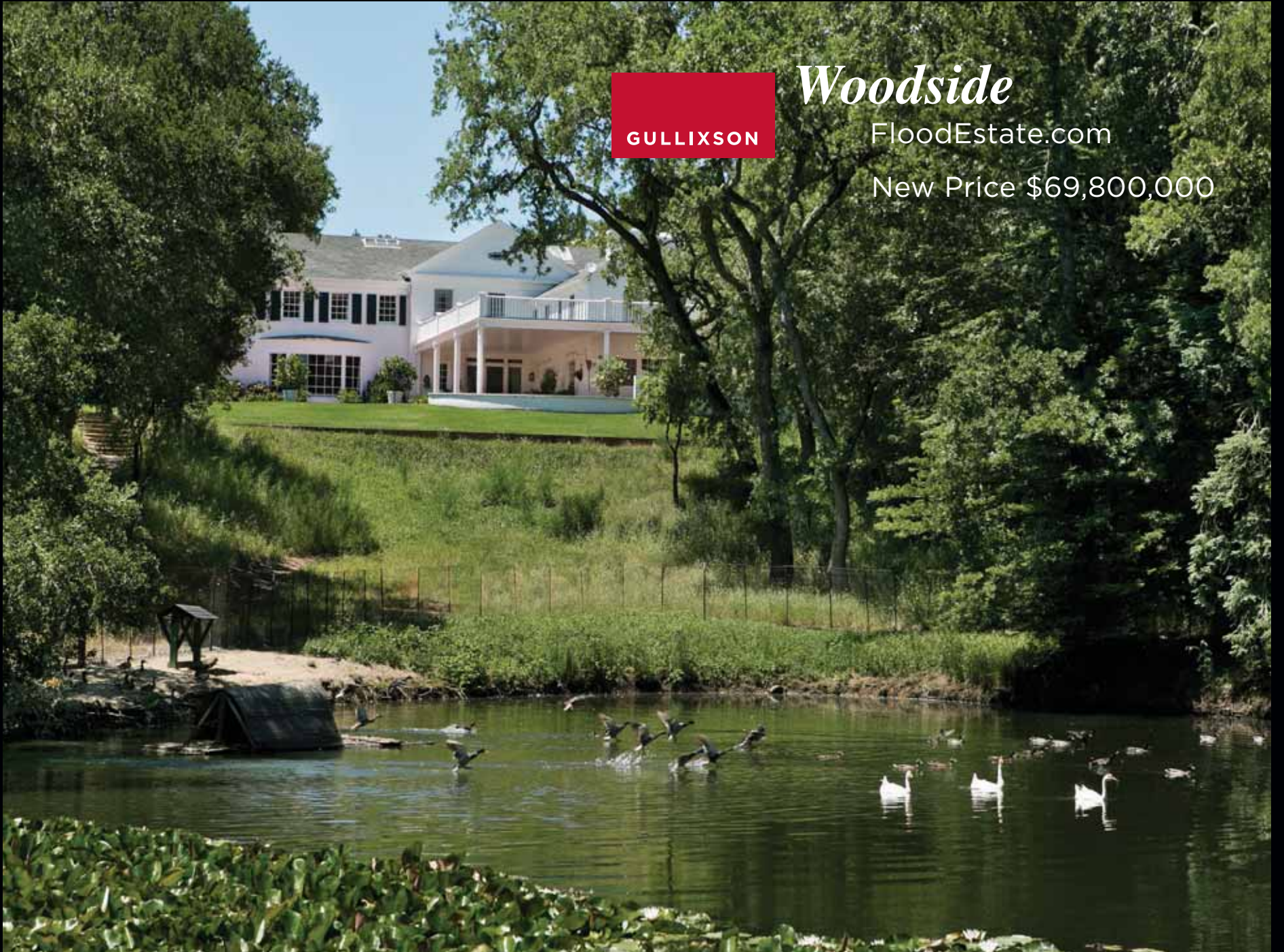




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PAMF Health Education
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Dr. Marvin Small Memorial Parent Workshop Series

Tuesday, May 14, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Mountain View Center
701 E. El Camino Real, Mountain View

Presented by Heidi Emberling, M.A.
Early Childhood Educator, ParentsPlace
650-934-7373

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PAMF Ophthalmology
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San Carlos Library
610 Elm Street, San Carlos

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PAMF Surgical Oncology, Urology
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The Aging Eye

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PAMF Ophthalmology
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VA 'Welcome Center' opens in Menlo Park

The Department of Veterans Affairs held a ribbon-cutting ceremony April 25 for a new 10,000-square-foot "Welcome Center" on the VA campus at 795 Willow Road in Menlo Park.

The center is a "comprehensive therapeutic facility" and gateway to the Menlo Park campus, the VA says.

It was built solely through donations from real estate developer and philanthropist

John Arrillaga, according to VA spokesperson Michael Hill-Jackson.

The center will provide a "point of navigation" on the campus and a "continuum of services" for veterans, from specialized rehabilitative classrooms to a service dog training area.

Visit tinyurl.com/VA-425 to download a PDF document with more information on the center.

WOODSIDE TREES

continued from page 11

Mendelson, active in the Peninsula's battle with SOD, urged application of the prescribed penalties. "The Town Council created the fines. The Town Council should enforce what they created," she said.

Mercy is appropriate in this case, said Councilman Tanner. Tree-trimming contractors misinform homeowners, and homeowners pay the price. "I don't think this was a deliberate act."

A lower fine is justified, said Councilman Dave Burow, because Mr. Gujral would probably have gotten a permit had he sought one.

Mayor Anne Kasten spoke directly to Mr. Gujral. "To me,

if you buy a piece of property here, you have a responsibility," she said. "I think in Woodside, what we do with the land is very important to us. I'm afraid you haven't been doing quite as much as you should."

She also addressed critics urging stiffer penalties, noting that this incident did not involve clear-cutting. "We work really hard to do what's right for Woodside," she said. "(A fine of) \$52,000 is for something that everybody in town will agree is off the charts. This is not off the charts."

In discussing Mr. Gujral's case, the council appeared agreeable to adding a range to the specific penalties now set at \$5,000 for the first tree, \$7,500 for the second and \$10,000 for each subsequent tree. ▀

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Robbery, assault, mail theft, car chase in Portola Valley

A Palo Alto man pleaded not guilty April 24 to robbery, assault with a deadly weapon, vandalism, car burglary, possession of stolen property, and reckless driving after a series of incidents in Portola Valley on April 21.

Stefan Dombovic, 21, was arrested April 21 after he lost control of his vehicle and crashed down an embankment in the 900 block of Westridge Drive, according to San Mateo County Chief Deputy District Attorney Karen Guidotti and the Sheriff's Office.

"He was ordered out of the car and he yelled to the officers in a Russian accent, 'This has nothing to do with Boston,'" Ms. Guidotti said. Mr. Dombovic is a Chechen who lives in Palo Alto, she said.

The officers found about 129 pieces of mail from 18 local addresses in the car, she said. A Sheriff's Office report adds that Mr. Dombovic "forcibly entered" three mailboxes on Alamos Lane and two on Westridge Drive, both entries made with a baseball bat.

The string of incidents began at 10 p.m. Sunday, April 21. A 13-year-old Portola Valley boy reading in his bedroom heard

a car come down the driveway of his home and park near his room. He went out to see what was going on and said he saw a man rummaging through his father's vehicle.

The boy asked the man what he was doing. The man allegedly yelled at the boy and charged at him with an aluminum baseball bat, hitting him in the shoulder, Ms. Guidotti said. The man then fled in a gold Toyota SUV, deputies said.

Deputies were already in the area to respond to a nearby car burglary. They saw the SUV driving on the wrong side of the road with the car lights off. A car chase ensued, with the pursued car accelerating to 60 miles per hour, Ms. Guidotti said.

Deputies said they "determined that he was under the influence of an alcoholic beverage."

Mr. Dombovic appeared in San Mateo County Superior Court on Wednesday, April 24, and pleaded not guilty. His bail was set at \$50,000. A preliminary hearing is set for 9 a.m. May 7.

—Reporting by Elena Kadavy and Dave Bocye.



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Tesla leaves Menlo behind this summer

Tesla Motors is preparing to leave Menlo Park in the rear-view mirror. The electric car retailer recently opened a renovated showroom on San Jose's Santana Row, and also got permission to open a second in Burlingame.

The Menlo Park store — one of the city's top 25 tax generators — is at 300 El Camino Real, a parcel owned by Stanford. The university has asked tenants to leave as leases expire in advance of its proposed mixed-use devel-

BRIEFS

opment. Tesla has been at that location since 2008.

"I can't speak to a specific date that our Burlingame store will open but it will be timed with the closing of our Menlo Park store, sometime this summer," Tesla spokeswoman Alexis Georgeson said.

The company first opened a Santana Row location in April 2011, Ms. Georgeson said, and

a few weeks ago launched its re-opening after completing renovations that tripled the size of the store to 5,600 square feet, making it Tesla's largest.

Grand opening for housing site

HIP Housing, a nonprofit specializing in finding affordable housing for San Mateo County residents, will hold a grand opening for its new Menlo Park property on Wednesday, May 8.

HIP Housing purchased the property at 1157-1161 Willow Road last year. The 12 units incorporate free Wi-Fi, solar power, and, thanks to Rebuilding Together Peninsula and Facebook, a new community room.

Nine units are reserved for people earning less than 50 percent of the county's median income of \$81,300 for an individual, and three units are reserved for those making less than 30 percent of that income. A total of nine apartments must go to people who either live or work in Menlo Park, and HIP Housing hopes to house up to five veterans there.

The grand opening takes place on site from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 8, and will include site tours.

Woodside chase leads to arrests

A police chase April 25 started in Davenport on the coast in Santa Cruz County, included a run through downtown Woodside, and ended near the Edgewood Road interchange on Interstate 280 in San Mateo County, where officers arrested two people.

The driver, Randy Frederick James Blanchard, 26, of San Jose, faces charges that include fleeing from a pursuing officer, driving a stolen vehicle, and possession of stolen property, according to the California Highway Patrol. Charges against the passenger, Marie Dominique Corral, 22, of San Jose, included possession of burglary tools.

During the chase, which involved multiple agencies, the Honda sideswiped two vehicles as it entered I-280 from Woodside Road. The CHP is asking the drivers of the sideswiped vehicles to contact Officer Matthew Storkman at 369-6261.

Artificial grass for Priory field still open question

The question is open as to whether the Woodside Priory School, a Catholic boarding school in Portola Valley, will win permission to use artificial grass for the interior field of a new running track. Environmental consciousness is a high priority in the town's general plan and in its public activities and operations.

In a 4-1 vote on April 24, with Councilwoman Ann Wengert dissenting, the council agreed to hold a public hearing soon on whether such a field would be in harmony with the intent and purpose of the general plan. The council's next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, May 8.

At the April 24 meeting, residents concerned about an artificial grass precedent vied with members of the Priory community.

Ford Field renovation to start in June

The Portola Valley Town Council has agreed to accept a bid of \$484,888 from the Jensen Corp., a landscape contractor, to renovate Ford Field, a Little League baseball field at 3329 Alpine Road.

Jensen's bid was the lowest of four the town received, according to a staff report. The town is funding the renovation using \$232,000 in state grants plus local donations. Members of the public have committed to \$59,000 so far. In addition, the Alpine-West Menlo Little League has committed to at least \$100,000, and the Sand Hill Foundation, led by Susan Ford Dorsey, has agreed to match up to \$100,000 in donations.



Current estimates show a shortfall of \$17,366 that could be shared equally by the town and the Little League. The work is set to begin in early June.

Reporting by Sandy Brundage and Dave Boyce.

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John Merrow
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PBS NewsHour

In conversation with
Prudence L. Carter
Professor, Stanford Graduate
School of Education

Free and open to the public.

Friday, May 3, 2013
Film, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. • Discussion, 7:00 to 7:45 p.m.
Cubberley Auditorium • Graduate School of Education
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John Merrow's latest film, based on 6 1/2 years of filming in post-Katrina New Orleans, reveals how a failing school system has become a fair-to-middling system of public charter schools. The cast of characters in the one-hour documentary includes Brittnie Jackson, a 19-year-old senior who has failed the graduation exit exam about a dozen times; Bobby Calvin, an engaging young man chafing under the harsh behavior code at his charter high school; two Teach for America corps members having dramatically different classroom experiences; and Clarke Bordelon, a special needs student whose mother cannot find a charter school willing to take on the challenge of teaching her son. As the film reveals, real change is possible, but anyone looking for a silver bullet will be disappointed.

Merrow and Professor Carter will use the film as a springboard to a broad range of issues. Audience participation will be encouraged.

For more information, please call (650) 723-0630.

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Identity thieves target Menlo Park residents

Shopping sprees are fun, but not when a stranger is spending your money. A Menlo Park man discovered that someone else had charged \$3,186 for online purchases in his name, police said.

He also received credit cards in the mail that he hadn't applied for, then discovered charges had already been made to the accounts, according to a police report filed April 22. Police spokeswoman Nicole Acker said that some types of cards, particularly those issued by stores, will approve a line of credit and temporary account number for shoppers to use before the card arrives in the mail.

Two other Menlo Park residents reported identity thefts on the same day, but neither lost money. One victim discovered that someone had used his Social Security number and other personal information to file a 2012 tax return when he received a larger-than-expected refund, Ms. Acker said.

The third victim realized someone had stolen his Social Security number and bank account information when an unknown suspect tried to transfer money out of the account. The bank alerted the account holder and prevented the transfer, according to police.

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April 29

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NEWSROOM

Managing Editor
Richard Hine (223-6525)

News Editor
Renee Batti (223-6582)

Lifestyles Editor
Jane Knoerle (223-6531)

Staff Writers
Dave Boyce (223-6527),
Sandy Brundage (223-6529)

Contributors
Marjorie Mader, Barbara Wood, Kate Daly

Special Sections Editors
Carol Blitzer, Sue Dremann

Photographer
Michelle Le (223-6530)

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Design Director
Shannon Corey (223-6560)

Designers
Linda Atilano, Lili Cao,
Diane Haas, Rosanna Leung,
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Newsroom Fax: (650) 223-7525

Advertising: (650) 854-2626
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Email news and photos with captions to:
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Viewpoint

IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES FROM PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY. EDITED BY TOM GIBBONEY

Bring in public on labor talks

As the costs of municipal labor contracts continue to climb, Atherton and Menlo Park are giving the public a chance to comment before their city councils begin labor negotiations, which are held behind closed doors.

Last week, prior to beginning talks with two police employee unions, the Menlo Park City Council heard from about a dozen residents, most of whom were highly concerned with the rising costs of labor contracts.

And in Atherton, upcoming labor talks are likely to be contentious when the town negotiates a new contract with police officers and sergeants. Complicating that discussion is the fact that Mayor Elizabeth Lewis and new council member Cary Wiest both were supported by the police union in the November election. And a recent letter from the union to all residents said there is a staffing crisis on the force that must be addressed.

At the Menlo Park meeting, the three lead organizers of Measure L, the 2010 ballot initiative that reduced pension benefits for non-police employees, continued their attack on high employee costs.

Roy Thiele-Sardina told the council the city has too many employees, saying 230 full-time workers is a number "most of us think is way too high."

Henry Riggs read from a laundry list of suggestions, including implementing a hiring freeze, outsourcing some services and requiring employees to pay more into their pension and health-care benefits.

Edward Moritz said that while Measure L did not address police pensions, it is time that the city address those benefits, which are the main driver of the city's skyrocketing pension costs.

The only contrary view came from union representative Rene Morales of the Service Employees' International, who told the council that current staffing levels are too low and causing stress among

employees. He added that existing work conditions had caused recruitment efforts to fail. Mr. Morales' union represents the majority of city employees.

And this points out the box that Menlo Park, Atherton and many other communities find themselves in: If they don't match or exceed salary increases granted by other cities, they could see their highly trained employees jump ship for better wages and benefits elsewhere. From 2005 to 2007 Menlo Park lost 30 police officers for various reasons, including some to retirement. All of a sudden the city found its police department woefully short-staffed, and was forced to pay out huge amounts of costly overtime. It took a vigorous recruiting program to bring police staffing to normal levels the following year.

The vicious merry-go-round of one city trying to meet or exceed salaries of other cities has caused municipal wages to spiral upward at an alarming rate. As salaries get higher, the small, annual percentage increases mean even more dollars are paid out in salary and retirement benefits, which are calculated on the last and highest salary. With strong municipal employee unions backing candidates for local office who will support their cause, it is difficult to imagine when, if ever, these ever-increasing salary increases will stop.

As the Menlo Park and Atherton councils take on this conundrum, it will be good for members to hear the public's take on labor negotiations. The councils should be completely transparent (as negotiation protocols permit) and share their options with the public. One technique, started several years ago by the Menlo Park Fire Protection District board, is to share details of a tentative salary agreement with the public 15 days before voting on it, and allow testimony before the board's action. This type of disclosure will at least give residents an idea of what their councils are up against in these often difficult negotiations.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Support Portola Valley's Measure O

Editor:

Measure O gives Portola Valley residents the opportunity to renew our commitment to supporting strong local schools.

My wife and I moved to Portola Valley nearly 10 years ago because we loved the character and feel of the town and felt it was a great community in which to raise a family. Our two children are both attending Portola Valley schools and are receiving a fantastic education. My kids are consistently challenged in the classroom and are really enjoying their experience at Ormondale and Corte Madera.

Over the years, our community has shown its strong support for local schools by approving local school funding that remains in our community. This month, we have the opportunity to renew this funding to make sure that our schools continue to have high quality teachers, challenging



Portola Valley Archives

Our Regional Heritage

In the early 1900s, growing strawberries for the San Francisco market was a big business in Portola Valley. In this undated photo, George Nahmens displays a tray of berries. He is sitting on a chest used to ship the fruit to San Francisco. Each chest could hold 20 trays of berries.

Continued on next page

A call for civility at Menlo council meetings

By Clem Molony

The April 24 Almanac gave a balanced report on the Menlo Park City Council meeting on April 16, but neglected to report on the tone of the meeting. A number of the speakers who were opposed to Stanford's development proposal acted irresponsibly. I was surprised by their lack of respect for their city leaders and their fellow citizens.

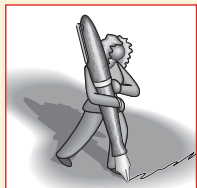
Those few who attacked our elected officials and other speakers were a disgrace to our town. In addition, it appears that the most bombastic of these speakers do not feel any shame for their irresponsible behavior.

Mayor Peter Ohtaki had specifically asked for civility during the public hearing. His guidance was rejected by the leaders of the critics. Today I am calling publicly for a repudiation of such tactics in the future, and a return to trusting our City Council, Planning Commission and city staff.

Here is some perspective: Recall that it was the City Council that requested a public hearing be held regarding Stanford's proposal. They want to hear citizens' concerns over traffic and other issues related to Stanford's proposal and the specific plan. Our council members are leaders in seeking an improved project proposal.

Also, recall that the specific plan resulted from five years of public outreach, expressing the public will. It had a hugely participatory visioning phase, and was adjusted over its final two years to meet many community concerns. The final plan document expresses our residents' core values, smart-growth goals, and our wonderful small-town positives.

At the meeting, a majority of those who spoke were mainly concerned about rush-hour traffic on El Camino Real, neighborhood cut-through traffic and its impact on family safety, and the size of the proposal (170 apartments on four acres, and three office buildings on the other four acres totaling 200,000 square feet).



**GUEST
OPINION**

I spoke during the meeting about trusting the planning process. (That process worked well a dozen years ago in the Willows neighborhood, to limit cut-through traffic when offices were built adjacent to us.) Perla Ni followed with her critical remarks, with a "Fox News" type slide show. She turned her back on the council members, and spoke mainly to her troops in the audience.

Many speakers who followed were more sincere, making good points about traffic and family safety. Yet, one of Ms. Ni's

boosters just yelled her criticisms at the council members. When I left around 10 p.m., a woman outside yelled at me, "Did Stanford pay you to speak tonight?" I explained, "No; I often participate in planning meetings." She jeered at me, "You don't even live in Menlo Park!" I explained that I do, owning a home here for 40 years.

Here are some of my comments to the council on the specific plan:

"I'm speaking tonight for common sense and moderation, and optimism about our wonderful city's future, even with the Peninsula's inevitable growth.

"I fully understand the fear of the homeowners in the Allied Arts neighborhood. A decade ago my Willows neighbors and I were highly vocal about possible

cut-through traffic from the office development at University and Hwy 101. Cut-through traffic from those office buildings (twice as big as Stanford's) would ruin our neighborhood.

"Well, city staff and leaders listened. The planning process moved forward carefully, adjustments were made, and today those feared problems did not materialize. Our Willows neighborhood is still a peaceful, walking, biking, kid-safe place to live.

"I hope my fellow residents will have faith in our city planning and leadership teams. The same good outcome will occur for the Allied Arts neighborhood. Already Stanford is cooperating. The latest plan has 70 percent less medical offices, which reduces car-trips by one-third. There is 35 percent more housing now. The open-space plaza is now 75 percent dedicated to pedestrians and bicycles.

"Modest modifications to the specific plan may indeed make sense. I trust the City Council's judgment. But major modifications, like separating these parcels from the plan, do not make sense. Please listen to the critics tonight. But do not lose faith in your neighbors' extensive support for our specific plan. It is a balanced, optimistic vision for Menlo Park's future."

I am pleased that the council set up a subcommittee to continue evaluation of this proposal and of the specific plan. Their work should get us off to a good start toward a return to civility around planning for our future. I hope that Almanac readers will join this call for a return to respect for our City Council and our city planning process.

Clem Molony lives on Menalto Avenue in Menlo Park.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Continued from previous page

academic programs, as well as art and music programs.

As I have spoken to other residents, many of whom do not have children in schools, I have been very pleased by the broad support for Measure O. The community understands the importance and value of providing our students with the best education possible in our local schools. This support reminds me why we moved to Portola Valley in the first place.

Please join me — and many others — in voting yes on Measure O.

*Stephen Cassani
Cervantes Road, Portola Valley*

Just say no to plastic playing fields

Editor:

Now that our town asks us to use paper bags, not plastic bags, and the town of Portola Valley and San Mateo County is sponsoring a green video that demonstrates the immense environmental damage to our environment and marine life from the millions of tons of plastic material we

discard (plastic does NOT recycle), the Portola Valley Town Council should carefully consider whether to allow plastic grass at the Priory playing field. Eventually it must be disposed of, adding tons of plastic to the environment.

The conservation element of our general plan asks that proposed projects be judged by their impact on the environment. Plastic grass playing fields would fail that test.

*Marilyn Walter
Coyote Hill, Portola Valley*

A chance to do something great for our schools

Editor:

From now until May 7 we have the opportunity to do something great for our community: Vote yes on Measure O to keep our Portola Valley Schools among the best.

Eleven years ago our family relocated from New York to the San Francisco Bay Area. We deliberately chose to live in Portola Valley because of the excellent reputation of the schools. Over the years I have never been disappointed in the schools. I am often amazed at the things my children are learning and the steps that the school's teachers and staff are taking to support each of my children in their academic growth and development. The

teachers and staff are highly qualified and they really care.

When I listen to my children talk about their day, see the work they are doing and progress they are making, I feel blessed that they have been in such a high caliber academic environment. In addition to the exceptionally strong core classes of math, science and English, we have enjoyed the benefits of the creativity cultivated by the strong music and art programs. My kids' enthusiasm for school speaks volumes about the quality of teachers and programs that exist in our schools.

I have had the chance to talk to many members in the community who do not have children in the schools yet are fully committed to supporting Measure O. This reminds me of the reason I came to this community — for the outstanding schools.

Please help renew this source of local funding that will stay right here in our schools. It's a no-brainer. Vote yes on Measure O.

*Janie MacArthur
Portola Valley*

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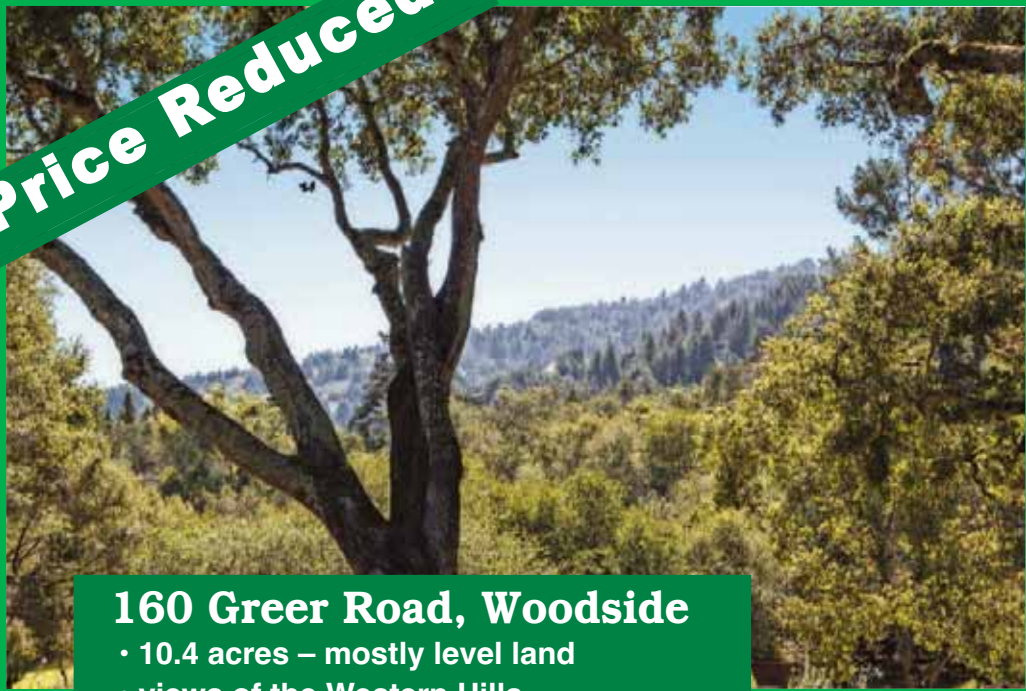
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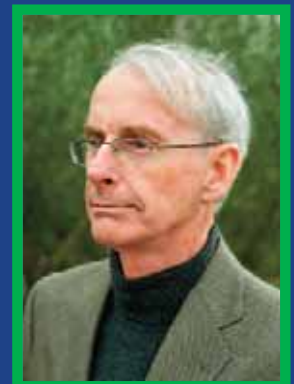
410 Manzanita Way

- 3.7 acres (approx)
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- \$5,500,000

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