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at Corte Madera School** | Page 10

The Almanac

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

AUGUST 27, 2014 | VOL. 49 NO. 51



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Steve Frank, Woodside middle school principal, and Lisa White (right), eighth-grade science teacher, experiment with 3-D learning on a zSpace system while Elizabeth Lytle of zSpace Inc. observes.

3-D 'virtual reality' coming to Woodside classrooms

By **Barbara Wood**
Almanac Staff Writer

Twenty-first century learning has become a buzzword in local educational circles, but Woodside Elementary School will soon be using a system that could truly deserve that label — a desktop interactive virtual reality system for students.

Middle school science students will be the first to use Woodside's zSpace system, including computer monitors and software plus special glasses that allow users to view computer-generated images of objects as if they were floating in the air in front of them.

Students and teachers can manipulate the objects to view them from any angle, and even look inside them. The system can be used for lessons as varied as dissecting a human heart, exploring a street on another continent or in another century, peering inside an erupting volcano, manipulating the fragile wings of a butterfly or building a robot.

Woodside middle school science teachers Lisa White and Vinicio Merlino, and Steve Frank,

who was recently promoted to be the middle school principal, were trained in the new system on Aug. 21, only two days after the new software was released.

Ms. White said the new teaching tool offers "a new page in our science book, one where things move off the two-dimensional paper page and into the realm of three dimensions." She said she found it "fascinating" to examine organisms, anatomical systems and molecules from every angle and at many depths.

Woodside is only the second school to learn how to use the newly released system, said trainer Elizabeth Lytle, director of educational transformation for Sunnyvale-based zSpace Inc., which makes the system.

Woodside Elementary School District Superintendent Beth Polito said the system cost \$81,149 for the year, including 22 machines, teacher training and technical support. The school plans to have fifth-grade science and social studies classes use the system later in the year.

The zSpace system comes with

an array of lessons that are tied to both state standards for subjects to be taught in each grade as well the national Common Core standards.

The company also has a library of 3-D models that currently numbers about 500, Ms. Lytle said. "Our goal is a thousand," she said. Models range from architecture and botany through historical artifacts and human anatomy to zoology.

In addition to the company's lessons, the company offers software developed by outside partners.

Teachers have their own machine and what they are doing can be projected on a smartboard so the entire class can see it. The system includes extra polarized glasses so onlookers can see what is being done on each workstation.

Superintendent Polito said the zSpace one-year pilot program's cost includes an \$11,000 one-time setup, installation and training fee. The total cost of the program is funded from lottery revenue and an annual federal instructional technology grant, she said. ■

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AThERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Contractor sentenced to jail for grand theft

By Barbara Wood
Almanac Staff Writer

A Palo Alto contractor who had been accused of defrauding an Atherton homeowner pleaded no contest to one misdemeanor charge of grand theft and was sentenced to 60 days in county jail under a plea agreement accepted by San Mateo County Superior Court Judge Mark Forcum on Aug. 15.

Other charges against Richard James Smith, 56, owner of R.J. Smith & Associates, including a count of fraud/forgery, were dropped as part of the plea agreement, according to San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe. Because the evidence was mostly circumstantial, prosecutors would have had difficulty proving fraud, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Karen Guidotti.

The judge dismissed all charges against a second defendant, Taniel Gusseinov, a former chief financial officer of the company, the district attorney reported. Because he was not the owner of the company, prosecutors might not be able to prove “that he was responsible for non-payment of the supplier, nor could we prove that he in any way personally profited from non-payment of the supplier,” Ms. Guidotti said.

The original charges brought against the two men alleged they had fraudulently over-billed Atherton homeowner Larry Lowry by thousands of dollars and diverted money owed to a subcontractor on the project, the District Attorney’s Office said. The total amount of alleged fraud was originally estimated at \$400,000 by the Atherton Police Department.

Court documents said Mr. Smith’s company was hired to do a major construction job on Mr. Lowry’s Stockbridge Avenue home. The alleged fraud came to light when fixtures from a subcontractor were late and the homeowner contacted the subcontractors directly, the documents say.

Ms. Guidotti said Mr. Smith’s primary defense was that, “while these may have been poor business practices, it did not amount to actual fraud or theft.” She said the DA’s office was concerned it could not prove the case beyond a reasonable doubt in a trial.

In addition to 60 days in county jail with no credit for time served, Mr. Smith was sentenced to two years of probation. He must pay \$7,000 in restitution to the victim as well as \$235 in court fines. He had been out on \$75,000 bail and was scheduled to surrender himself into custody on Nov. 1. ■

Multiple mountain lion reports in Portola Valley

The San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office said it has received reports of multiple mountain lion sightings in Portola Valley in recent days, including a report of seeing three mountain lions in the vicinity of Westridge Drive and Cervantes Road in Portola Valley at around 11:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 21.

In addition, a mountain lion was reported sighted around 11:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 23, in the 800 block of Portola Road and around 6:15 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 24, near Hayfields Road, county officials said.

Residents are advised to avoid hiking when mountain lions are most active — at dawn, dusk or at night — and to keep a close

watch on small children.

Here is advice from the California Department of Fish and Game on what to do when spotting a mountain lion:

■ If you see a mountain lion, do not approach it, especially one that is feeding or with offspring. Most mountain lions will try to avoid confrontation.

■ Avoid hiking or jogging when mountain lions are most active: at dawn, dusk, and at night.

■ If you encounter a mountain lion, do not run; instead, face the animal, make noise and try to look bigger by waving your arms; throw rocks or other objects. Pick up small children.

Go to keepmewild.org for more information.



Hunter Properties

Townhomes may replace nursery

A view of the proposed 26-unit townhome complex Hunter Properties wants to build at 133 Encinal Ave., the former site of the Roger Reynolds nursery, as seen from Garwood Way.

Roger Reynolds nursery site may sprout townhomes

By Sandy Brundage
Almanac Staff Writer

When the Roger Reynolds Nursery & Carriage Stop abruptly closed in 2013 after 97 years in business, patrons lamented its loss and wondered what would become of the property.

“What next?” asked one resident on Town Square. “High density development, more offices, maybe some housing, increased backups at what is currently the least-gridlocked train crossing.

Too bad for all of us in so many ways.”

It looks like the answer to “what’s next” could be housing: A developer has submitted a proposal to build townhomes on the site.

Hunter Properties, based in Cupertino, would knock down the nursery buildings at 133 Encinal Ave. to construct 26 three-story townhomes, currently proposed as rental units, according to Menlo Park Senior Planner Thomas Rogers. Each unit would have

four bedrooms. Garden plots, a play area, common seating areas and private patios would provide open space.

The Victorian cottage dubbed the “Carriage Stop” will remain, but be relocated to a new position on the 1.74-acre property.

The application was submitted on Aug. 14 and is currently undergoing an initial review by staff. The property sits within the boundaries of the downtown/El Camino Real specific plan. ■

Learning by doing: Students acquire multiple skills by working on projects

By Barbara Wood
Almanac Staff Writer

Imagine second-graders designing a new outdoor classroom for themselves, not just a place they dream of spending time in, but one that could actually be built.

Or imagine fourth-graders studying traditional music before composing and recording their own folk songs, making them available for download online.

Teachers in Portola Valley imagined just those projects, and many more, this summer as part of two workshops for 37 teachers and administrators. They were studying project-based learning, in which students learn multiple academic subjects while doing broad-based projects, often working in teams.

During the coming school year, every Ormondale and Corte Madera teacher will have

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

their students work on at least one project, with a plan to show the end results to parents and the community in the spring.

Second-grade teachers Debbie Grech and Adam Ahlback developed the outdoor classroom project. They plan to have students research design options and material costs, interview

‘We must develop new ways to motivate and teach this generation.’

SUPERINTENDENT LISA GONZALES

students and staff about their needs, and talk to local architects. Each team will create a design, write up a proposal and present it.

The teachers said the project will probably be done in phases

and could take two or three years to complete.

It may not be obvious at first glance, but by working on the project, the second-graders will actually be studying math, language arts, science, social studies and art as well as using technology, said district Superintendent Lisa Gonzales.

The superintendent said teachers and administrators are excited about the concept, which she believes will help students become “creative, passionate learners who are connected, contributing global citizens.”

Ms. Gonzales said students must use entrepreneurship, teamwork and problem-solving to complete the projects. “This helps better prepare students for future learning, skills needed in jobs, and beyond,” she said.

Juliet Green, who teaches fourth- to eighth-grade music at Corte Madera School, designed

See **PROJECT** page 6

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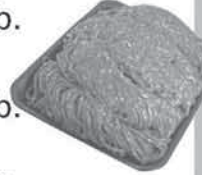

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	Tortilla Chips	\$2.39
	Nancy's Petite Quiche 8oz	\$3.19
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{ www.robertsmarket.com }

New gas lines ahead for Portola Valley Ranch

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

A project to replace 1,600 feet of low-pressure PVC gas main and 11 residential service lines will get underway in late October in parts of the Portola Valley Ranch subdivision in Portola Valley. The affected streets will be Valley Oak, Acorn and Ohlone, according to an Aug. 13 statement by Pacific Gas & Electric Corp.

The pipe replacements are "to ensure the safety and trust of our customers in the neighborhood," PG&E said. The project comes in the aftermath of the discovery on June 18 of a "failed joint" in a 3-inch main at 5 Valley Oak.

Gas was leaking to the atmosphere through a crack in the roadway several feet away from the failed joint. Not long after firefighters arrived, they ordered nearby residents to stay indoors, an order that remained in effect for more than three hours.

The lines to be replaced, including the line with the recently failed joint, date from 1984; a similar joint failed in 2008 on the same plastic main involved in the

recent failure, PG&E said. The company said it has assigned a project manager who has been in contact with Town Hall.

The June 18 incident began at about 11:20 a.m. when someone called 911 to report an odor of natural gas. Firefighters responded and around noon, issued a shelter-in-place order for residents on Valley Oak, Acorn and Bayberry streets. Firefighters went door-to-door to inform residents and would have evacuated residents in the immediate vicinity of the leak had the residents been at home, firefighters said at the time.

The shelter-in-place order was lifted at about 3:20 p.m. and by about 9 p.m., the failed joint had been repaired. During the day, PG&E conducted checks for methane in the areas of Corte Madera School, Los Trancos Road and across Alpine Road around Canyon Drive. PG&E found no leaks and no one was reported injured, Town Manager Nick Pegueros said at the time.

Until the project is complete, PG&E will be conducting monthly "special leak" surveys of the 1984 main, the statement said. ▣

Two elected to board posts

Jacqueline Wender of Menlo Park has been elected vice president of the board of directors of the Sempervirens Fund, a Los Altos-based nonprofit that works to protect local redwood forests. Another Menlo Park resident, Howard Chao, has been elected to the board.

Ms. Wender is senior assistant dean of administration at the Santa Clara University School of Law. At Stanford University, she was executive director of the overseas studies program, assistant to President Gerhard Casper, and associate

provost for program development and facilities planning.

Mr. Chao is an investor and senior Asia adviser with the law firm O'Melveny & Meyers in Menlo Park. He is also a member of the board of the Pacific Pension Institute.

Sempervirens Fund says it has protected more than 53 square miles of local redwood forests and watersheds, and is working to re-establish the Great Park, a redwood forest between Silicon Valley and the Pacific Ocean.

—Tiffany Lam

PROJECT

continued from page 5

involves younger students. Her fourth-graders will research and learn traditional children's songs. Next they will compose and record songs, using input and feedback from 5- to 6-year-olds.

"Songs they've created will then be available on iTunes and other music services, just like professional composers," Ms. Green said. By the end of the unit, she said, students will have the skills to create and distribute their own music, "which is a very exciting prospect for them."

Superintendent Gonzales said that project-based learning is

meant to provide students with skills that employers want, such as communication, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration.

"We must develop new ways to motivate and teach this generation," she said.

Ms. Gonzales said that Portola Valley wants students to become life-long learners, productive workers, and active citizens. "No matter the grade level or subject area," she said, "real-world relevance in learning is critical."

When students do projects based on academic content "students learn how to take responsibility and build confidence, solve problems, work collaboratively, communicate ideas, and be creative innovators," she said. ▣



The Sobrato Organization rendering

The Sobrato Organization won the Menlo Park City Council's approval on Aug. 19 to build an office complex at 151 Commonwealth Drive.

New office complex coming to Menlo Park's M-2 zone

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

A new business complex will bring at least \$1 million in guaranteed revenue to Menlo Park, along with 259,920 square feet of office space in the city's industrial M-2 zone.

A 5-0 vote by the council on Aug. 19 gave a green light to the Sobrato Organization to construct two four-story office buildings on a 13-acre site at 151 Commonwealth Drive.

Representatives from several

local nonprofits, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula and InnVision, spoke about the Sobrato Organization's financial support of their programs. The council thanked the company for its community service, but also asked to increase the public benefits in exchange for approval of the project, something which the Planning Commission had also suggested.

The Sobrato Organization agreed to pay Menlo Park a mini-

mum of \$100,000 annually for 10 years — increased at the council's request from the original amount of \$75,000 — along with one-time payments of \$150,000 for the city's capital improvement fund and \$1.85 million for the below-market-rate housing fund. In addition, the company and the city will both contribute to replacing an aging water main that crosses the site.

Construction of the complex is expected to be finished in 2015. ■

Avenue may be named after Hattie Bostic

Although not a formal action, the Menlo Park City Council indicated its support on Aug. 19 for renaming a portion of Hamilton Avenue after the late Hattie Bostic.

Belle Haven residents and members of the Mt. Olive Apostolic Original Holy Church of God, which was founded by Ms. Bostic, spoke about the inspiration she had given the community through her sermons as well as the crime prevention, affordable housing and youth programs she created.

The city's staff agreed to research the process for renaming the street and will bring it back to the council for approval.

Payday lenders, keep out

A unanimous 5-0 vote by the Menlo Park City Council on Aug. 19 declared payday and auto title loan businesses to be public nuisances that weren't welcome in the city. None exist in Menlo Park, and the council

■ MENLO BRIEFS

wants to keep it that way.

Two years ago, council members instituted a moratorium on such businesses, out of concern that the sky-high interest rates charged on the loans exploited lower-income residents desperate for financial aid. The Aug. 19 vote made the ban permanent.

Initiative analysis will be analyzed

Lisa Wise Consulting, the contractor hired by the city to analyze the downtown/El Camino Real specific plan initiative, now known as ballot Measure M, will be paid an additional \$15,000 to assess criticisms of the analysis made by those who support the initiative.

The Menlo Park City Council unanimously approved the expenditure on Aug. 19 in the face of conflicting comments by initiative supporters, who

earlier this month demanded that the city fix what they saw as deficiencies in the analysis, but who, during the Aug. 19 council meeting, questioned whether the city should spend more money to evaluate their concerns.

The total amount appropriated for the endeavor is now \$165,000.

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REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Fall Real Estate Season is Here

Dear Monica: We want to sell our house sometime in the next year or two and are deciding whether to wait or not to wait to put it on the market. We have not done much to improve it in the 20 years we have owned it but it is in a popular neighborhood and the market is very good. We may need to fix it up before selling it. Do you have advice to give us? Linda C.

Dear Linda: We are just about to begin what is often the second business real estate season of the year after the spring market. Since one cannot know what the future market will be, you may want to play it safe and sell now when you know the market is good. I would advise you to take a critical look at your house and

fix any items that might negatively affect its value, such as significant leaks, substandard installations, and other material elements. You can sell it just as it is without doing anything, but often the investment you make in making the house more attractive and sound, pays for itself many times over. If you are not quite ready to move ahead, or your plans are not complete at this time, you should begin to work on the house in stages and wait to put your house on the market in early 2015. This extra time, if you use it well, will allow you to plan your next move carefully and not feel rushed. The market should continue to be strong into next year, so it is probably not a risk to wait until then.

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



How State Water Conservation Regulations Affect Cal Water Customers

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has adopted a resolution requiring us to notify you of four prohibited water uses established by the State Water Resources Control Board in July 2014 in response to severe drought conditions:

1. Do not apply potable water to outdoor landscapes in a manner that causes runoff onto adjacent property, non-irrigated areas, private and public walkways, roadways, parking lots, or structures.
2. Do not wash a motor vehicle with potable water using a water hose, unless that hose is fitted with a shut-off nozzle or another attachment that stops water from flowing when the hose is not immediately in use.
3. Do not use potable water on any driveways and sidewalks.
4. Do not use potable water in a fountain or other decorative water feature, unless the water is part of a recirculating system.

The CPUC also authorized us to use various tools to enforce these restrictions, including flow-restricting devices and discontinuance of service. Local enforcement agencies may also impose fines of up to \$500. We prefer to avoid using these enforcement tools if at all possible; however, we will be required to take action if a customer repeatedly violates these restrictions.

Please visit www.calwater.com/drought for updated information about the prohibited water uses, other unauthorized water uses, and mandatory outdoor irrigation restrictions in our Water Conservation and Rationing Plan (Rule 14.1 in our tariff). We also encourage you to take advantage of conservation programs available to Cal Water customers and listed on our web site.

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Neighbors protest water waste at Corte Madera School

By Barbara Wood
Almanac Staff Writer

Portola Valley residents who live near Corte Madera School have become increasingly upset this summer as water continues to run down nearby streets from the school grounds, but school officials say they are doing their best to solve the problem.

As local residents change their habits, and their landscaping, to deal with the reality of a state-wide drought, tempers can sometimes flare if water appears to be being wasted.

That's what happened in Portola Valley this summer, when residents who live near Corte Madera School noticed the same thing they say they've noticed in years past — water running down Alpine Road from the school's playing fields.

Lisa Gonzales, superintendent of the Portola Valley School District, said the district has tried everything to figure out why the water continues to run.

Ms. Gonzales, who was hired by the district in July 2013, said the district has taken some actions: It has plugged at least one leak in the Corte Madera irrigation system, changed the frequency of mowing so the grass can absorb more moisture, reduced the watering by a third,

started watering for shorter periods of time, and tried to figure out which storm drains and culverts aren't working as they should.

In addition, she said, the district has talked to the town of Portola Valley, to four different contractors and to neighbors about the problems.

But neighbors say that as late as Aug. 17, water was still running off the school grounds and sprinklers were running in the heat of the day, instead of in early morning as water officials recommend.

"On Saturday (Aug. 16) water was pouring at noon and 6 p.m.," said neighbor Angela Hey, who posted video and photos online.

Another neighbor said on the same day, eight sprinklers were watering the field as the outside temperature reached 80 degrees, with "water pouring down Alpine Road ... this is not a leak."

Superintendent Gonzales said the district still has a few things left to try, including digging up blacktop and digging under buildings to try to find leaks or broken pipes.

Dawn Smithson, local manager at the California Water Company, said the company has been working with the school district to help resolve the problem.



Photo by Angela Hey

Neighbors of Corte Madera School say the school district is wasting water by allowing sprinklers to run midday and to soak asphalt instead of grass, as shown in this photo taken on Aug. 16 on the Corte Madera campus.

The second item on the company's list of "unauthorized uses" is "use of water that results in flooding or run-off in gutters or streets." However, Ms. Smithson said, for the time being, Cal Water does not have

any penalties for those who waste water.

"At this time, Cal Water is in a 'voluntary conservation' mode," she said. "We are doing our best to reach the required 20 percent conservation through educating

our customers; we are enforcing through education. So far this seems to be effective." ■

Go to tinyurl.com/water822 to see Cal Water's restrictions on water use.

Three of five candidates want to change district

By Tiffany Lam
Special to the Almanac

HEALTH CARE

Five candidates are running for three open seats on the governing board of the Sequoia Healthcare District in the Nov. 4 election, including three who advocate allowing voters to decide whether the district should exist.

Incumbent candidate Jack Hickey said he wants to leave the decision to dissolve the district up to voters, and is joined on the ballot by candidates who support that position: small business owner John McDowell and retired businessman Mark J. De Paula.

Incumbent candidates Dr. Gerald "Jerry" Shefren and Arthur Faro said they think the district's programs provide a public health benefit to district residents, and want voters to return them to the board to continue this work.

Currently, the district spends \$9 million a year, a portion of countywide property taxes from residents within

the district, on local health projects and nonprofit health care organizations.

District funds were previously used to operate Sequoia Hospital, built in 1946. The hospital was sold in 1996 to Dignity Health, and the hospital district converted into the Sequoia Healthcare District.

Dissolving the district would not reduce taxes for district residents, but redistribute the portion currently allocated to the district to other county agencies, such as school districts and cities, according to Mark Hudak, general counsel for the district, in a 2008 memo.

Voting in favor of dissolution would begin a process involving the Local Agency Formation Commission, which would hold public hearings and issue reports to determine whether dissolution is in the public interest, according to Mr. Hudak.

The district serves 220,000 residents in central and southern San Mateo

County, including the cities of Atherton, Belmont, Redwood City, Portola Valley, San Carlos, Woodside, and portions of Menlo Park, Foster City, and San Mateo.

Candidate information

Mr. Hickey is a retired research scientist and has been on the district board for 11 years. He has long campaigned for the dissolution of the district. "If it didn't already exist, would we create such a district — whose elected directors dole out tax dollars to their favorite charities?" said Mr. Hickey in his candidate statement.

Mr. McDowell said he has worked as a press secretary in Washington, D.C., for the U.S. Small Business Administration. If voters support the district's current philanthropic purposes, Mr. McDowell wants the district to use its allocated funds to benefit the entire county, or to spend them on programs that are available to all taxpayers in the district, according to his candidate statement.

In response, Mr. Michelson, CEO of the Sequoia Healthcare District, said that

health programs and organizations must already use district funds to provide for district residents. Also, the district requires the organizations to report on outcomes, numbers of people served, and where those people reside.

Mr. De Paula is a retired telecommunications industry worker and Vietnam War-era veteran of the U.S. Air Force. "I support dissolving the district," said Mr. De Paula in his candidate statement. "The district should not distribute tax dollars to favored special interest groups."

Dr. Shefren is a physician and president of the five-member district board. "The district grants program has improved community health," Dr. Shefren said in his candidate statement. "It expands access through free clinics for indigent residents and provides grants to not-for-profit organizations that focus on disease prevention."

Mr. Faro is vice president of the district board. He is a retired CEO of Sequoia Hospital. ■

Mandarin school backers seek district support

By Barbara Wood
Almanac Staff Writer

Backers of the proposed Menlo Mandarin Immersion Charter School say they will officially ask the Menlo Park City School District to sponsor their school at the board's Sept. 9 meeting.

Nearly 150 people, including Menlo Park district Superintendent, Maurice Ghysels and the board President Joan Lambert, attended two informational meetings on the planned charter school on Aug. 24 in Palo Alto.

Once the proposed charter and a petition from parents supporting the school is presented, the district has 30 days to schedule a public hearing and 60 days to make its decision on the request.

Charter school backers say their goal is to open in the fall

of 2015 with two classes each of kindergartners and first-graders, totaling at least 80 students.

If the district denies the request, it can be appealed to the San Mateo County Board of Education and ultimately to the California State Board of Education.

The district has scheduled a study session on charter school laws and process for Sept. 3, from 5 to 7 p.m. in the TERC building at the district offices, 181 Encinal Ave. in Atherton. They will not discuss any specifics of the proposal.

"This is all new to us," said Ms. Lambert. "We are really trying to do our homework and make sure we are doing everything correctly."

State law requires the petition contain signatures from district parents of at least half the number of students the school plans

Backers plan to present charter and petition to school board on Sept. 9.

to have its first year.

Carol Cunningham, a Menlo Park district parent who has led the push for the school, said the backers of the school have the needed signatures. However, she said, they hope to get enough to ask the district to provide classrooms for the new school. Under state law, a charter school with 80 students must be provided facilities by the district in which it operates.

At the informational meeting, Ms. Cunningham and other speakers said the proposed school will not only teach

most subjects in Mandarin, but will use other innovative educational methods, such as project-based learning in which children study academic subjects via broad-based projects; personalized learning, based on each child's ability level; and methods that emphasize critical thinking and problem-solving.

Children will learn to read, write and speak Mandarin. Several experts in the language education field presented statistics showing that students in local Mandarin immersion schools usually perform better than their same-school peers on standardized testing in math and English.

While the details of the school's operation will be contained in its proposed charter, speakers said that if more students apply to the school than

it has room for, priority will be given to district residents and children of school staff or school founders, and then will be assigned via lottery.

If spaces are not filled, out-of-district students may attend. Grace Mah, a member of the Santa Clara County Board of Education, said funding for charter schools is set by the state at a per-pupil rate which is paid by the district they live in. Currently, she said, that base rate is \$7,643 per student. "The funding follows the student," she said. Charter school may also accept donations.

"We're really looking forward to collaborating with the district to create a high quality charter school that will be a win-win solution for everyone, the district, the parents and the community," said Ms. Cunningham after the meeting. ▀

Atherton takes first look at housing plan update

By Barbara Wood
Almanac Staff Writer

An update of Atherton's housing element, a state-mandated plan for providing housing to people of all income levels, is on the agenda for the Atherton Planning Commission meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 27, at 6 p.m. in the council chambers at 94 Ashfield Road.

The commission will hold a study session on the housing element. A public hearing on the plan is tentatively set for Sept. 16. The housing element, a section of the town's general plan, will then go to the City Council for final approval. An updated version of the housing element, covering 2014 to 2022, must be approved by Jan. 1, 2015.

A report on the housing element from Baird + Driskell Community Planning shows some changes in the demographics of the town over the past 10 years. The population of Atherton in 2013 was 6,893, slightly down from 2003, the report says, and the population

is not expected to grow over the next 10 years.

The number of residents between the ages of 60 and 74 in Atherton has increased, he report says, from 15 percent of the population in 2000 to 20 percent in 2011. Despite Atherton's reputation as a wealthy community, the report points out that 9 percent of the town's residents makes less than \$25,000 a year and 600 to 700 Atherton households must stretch resources to pay their housing costs.

Over the next eight years, the town is expected to provide 93 new homes to meet its share of regional housing needs, the report says, with 90 of those to be for moderate income (\$107,150 annual income) or below.

The report suggests that Atherton make no changes in the way it has planned to provide additional housing: to allow secondary units, such as guest houses, at the rate of four or five a year, and to allow faculty and student housing at Menlo School and Menlo College of up to 90 units. ▀

Stephen Dino Bellumori

1949 – 2014

I have attended many memorial services and, invariably, the departed is remembered as a wonderful person, a good family man, and a great guy. Steve Bellumori was all of the above and more. Steve was a remarkable human being because

was part of his DNA.

He was a top producer at Coldwell Banker in Menlo Park for over thirty years. In a business where more things go wrong than right, Steve was always part of the solution and never part of the problem. No wonder he was a Top-100 agent for three decades and beloved by his staff, his

colleagues and his legions of clients. And his smile was infectious.

honest, detail oriented, and affable. Steve set the gold standard for ethics, honesty, and integrity.

We met recently at a house he was appraising. It had been a year or so since we last talked, and he could not have

been nicer. Instead of the perfunctory, "hey, how ya do'n" from 100 yards, Steve took time to introduce himself to my wife and my son. We chatted for a while, and Steve suggested we get together soon for drinks and "catch up." And he meant it. Steve Bellumori was a wonderful person, a good family man, and a really great guy. He had no choice, that's who and what he was.



After twenty-five-plus years as a real estate broker, I can assure you there are many agents who only want to "get the deal done," at any cost. Steve Bellumori was not one of them. We completed several transactions together, and he was the epitome of a consummate professional: punctual, organized, diligent,

My thoughts and prayers go to Steve's wife, Darline, and the Bellumori family. I'm going to miss Steve immensely as will the entire Menlo-Atherton real estate community.

Denis Morrissey
Broker Associate-Coldwell Banker

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PAID OBITUARY

City newsletter criticized for bias against Measure M

By **Sandy Brundage**

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Focus, the city's quarterly newsletter, generally garners only as much attention as it takes to decide whether to read it first before recycling it. But that changed when the latest issue came out with an article on Measure M, the initiative on the November ballot that would change the city's downtown/El Camino Real specific plan.

Initiative supporters cried foul upon spotting the article, which compares the measure to the current incarnation of the specific plan. Calling the newsletter biased, former council member Heyward Robinson said he's asked the California State Attorney General's office to look into whether the city illegally spent public funds on a campaign mailer masquerading as a newsletter.

The city, on the other hand, said the information in the article was presented without bias.

"I think most of that context (and) background info has

been up on the (city's website) for a while, so it's not really anything new," said Senior Planner Thomas Rogers, the city's lead contact on the specific plan. He added that an attorney had reviewed the material on the website.

Attorney Greg Stepanicich, who has a contract with the city to address specific plan issues, vetted the website content. (The city attorney has a conflict of interest since his office sits within the plan's boundaries.)

Mr. Stepanicich said state law allows a city to provide information on a measure that fairly analyzes its impacts and effects without taking a partisan position.

"A city may not advocate for or against a measure during the election campaign, although state law authorizes a city council to prepare a ballot argument against a measure filed by petition," Mr. Stepanicich said. "State law permits cities to send newsletters or other written materials to their residents that educate the public on the measure."

■ MENLO PARK

The attorney said he did not review the Menlo Focus newsletter.

The question is whether the newsletter article meets the standard of impartiality. A public agency "must present a balanced description of the favorable and unfavorable impacts of the measure," according to the state attorney general's website.

While the newsletter does copy information from the city's vetted website, it's an incomplete copy.

In its discussion of Measure M's proposed restrictions on office space, for example, the city's website states, "Like any proposed use, office use has both positive and negative attributes and impacts." It goes on to list the negatives along

with the positives.

However, the negative impacts aren't included in the newsletter, even though the article does mention the benefits: "Historically, office development generally has a positive fiscal impact on a community" and supports economic activity at other local businesses such as stores and restaurants.

Another section of the article describes the multi-year public process that created the specific plan, then states, "The proposed measure would implement revisions by a simple public vote, without the deeper public process that is recognized as most constructive for such complicated planning programs."

Menlo Focus is mailed to 12,000 households in Menlo Park, with an additional 1,000 copies available for pickup at city facilities, at a cost of

\$5,000 per quarterly issue, according to the city.

Mayor Ray Mueller was less than enthusiastic about the inclusion of Measure M in the latest issue.

"I don't review its content prior to publication. I am told the aforementioned article is technically legal. That being said, I personally would have preferred that it not refer to Measure M," he commented.

"It may unnecessarily create a question for some as to whether city resources are being spent for political purposes, and ammunition for others who would choose to criticize city staff."

Should the attorney general's office find that the newsletter advocates a position on Measure M instead of presenting a balanced summary, Menlo Park could face sanctions, including fines. ■

Deputies cite 75 for speeding in Woodside, Portola Valley

By **Dave Boyce**

Almanac Staff Writer

Seventy-five speeding tickets, 15 tickets for "distracted driving" and eight for seat belt violations were issued to drivers in Woodside and Portola Valley on Wednesday, Aug. 20, according to statistics from the San Mateo County Police Chiefs and Sheriff Association.

The Aug. 20 enforcement, part of the county-wide initiative known as the Saturation Traffic Enforcement Program, was the eighth this year, Deputy Rebecca Rosenblatt said. Officers in squad cars and motorcycles concentrate on "trouble spots" in the county, looking in particular for speeding violations, unsafe turning movements, and cell phone and seat belt violations.

In Woodside, one apparent trouble spot was the stretch of Woodside Road between Alameda de las Pulgas and Interstate 280. The Almanac's Town Square online forum lit up with comments responding to a poster complaining about having been cited for speeding on Woodside Road as it approaches I-280 and the speed limit drops to 35 mph from 45 mph.

That stretch of road is infamous. Michelle Mazzei, a fourth-grade teacher at Oak Knoll School in Menlo Park and an experienced cyclist and triathlete, died in October 2005 after being struck by a car while cycling westbound on Woodside Road. She was 34.

The STEP event allowed officers to monitor any location inside the limits of Woodside, Portola Valley and Redwood City. Ms. Rosenblatt said she did not have specific information as to where the deputies were deployed.

The day yielded 133 citations at locations within Woodside

and Portola Valley and 156 in Redwood City, according to the association's statement. To date in the county, officers participating in the initiative have issued 1,598 citations for 2014, including 411 for "distracted driving."

"The participating officers remained committed to making a high volume of traffic stops in this coordinated saturation, while maintaining the highest levels of community awareness and professionalism," she said. "The number of stops and citations during this most recent deployment reflect a sustained enthusiasm for this program and traffic safety on the Peninsula."

The program is funded by the state's Office of Traffic Safety. The goal: to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities in accidents that involve alcohol and "other primary collision factors," according to an OTS grant application. Methods available include DUI checkpoints and patrols as well as what the officers were doing on Aug. 20: concentrating on speed, distracted driving and seat belt violations.

"These strategies are designed to earn media attention, thus enhancing the overall deterrent effect," the grant application says.

Police departments from around San Mateo County are listed as participants in the program, including police in Atherton and Menlo Park. More deployments are coming, the statement said. "The San Mateo County Police Chiefs and Sheriff Association has committed to this important safety initiative. ■



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Sharon Heights: Stop sign on Monte Rosa Avenue delayed

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

At Vice Mayor Catherine Carlton's request, the Menlo Park council tabled the question of whether to install stop signs in all directions at the intersection of Monte Rosa Drive and Eastridge Avenue in Sharon Heights.

The city began considering the installation after a resident raised concerns about low visibility at the intersection, which children navigate on their way to La Entrada Middle School. While Eastridge Avenue has stop signs at the intersection, Monte Rosa doesn't at that location, making it confusing for drivers as well, according to the resident.

The Transportation Commission and the city's transportation staff support the installation. But members of a homeowners' association wanted to discuss the issue first, with some members saying they weren't aware that installing

'Some people think a four-way stop is overkill.'

COUNCILWOMAN
CATHERINE CARLTON

the stop signs on Monte Rosa Drive had been proposed during the summer, Ms. Carlton said during the Aug. 19 council meeting.

"Some people think a four-way stop is overkill," she said, and they thought trimming bushes at the intersection would be an adequate solution.

Mayor Ray Mueller commented that since the Transportation Commission had unanimously recommended the installation and the city's transportation staff agreed, the council should not wait to vote on the item. Children who walk along the area are returning to school now and there are no crosswalks, he said.

"We've been advised," Mr. Mueller said. Although no one

has been hurt at the intersection to date, should a child be injured now, he suggested the council would regret not taking action sooner.

Council members Kirsten Keith, Rich Cline and Peter Ohtaki favored delaying the vote to give the residents time to hold one discussion.

"I don't want to cast a shadow of 'we don't want to hear your point,'" Mr. Cline said.

The transportation staff disagreed that the problem lay with the bushes. Interim Transportation Manager Nikki Nagaya said a couple large heritage trees would also have to be removed, and then the curve of the road would still interfere with having a clear view of the intersection.

No members of the public commented on the item during the Aug. 19 council meeting, but some residents had contacted the city to voice their dissatisfaction with the proposal.

The council voted 4-1, with Mr. Mueller dissenting, to delay the vote until Sept. 9. ■

Man suspected of burglary in Sharon Heights arrested

After a brief chase, deputies with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office captured and arrested a 34-year-old Belmont man on Aug. 20 in connection with a number of burglaries, including in Atherton and one in Menlo Park the same day.

Kevin Michael Dolf is in custody on \$75,000 bail and is facing charges of burglary, check fraud and resisting arrest. He was arrested in North Fair Oaks in the vicinity of 5th Avenue and El Camino Real. No one was injured in the incident.

A search of Mr. Dolf's vehicle turned up items "thought to be related" to recent residential burglaries, including in Atherton and Menlo Park, and deputies notified those police departments.

The incident began at about 11:10 a.m. on Aug. 20, deputies said, with a call to Sheriff's Office dispatchers from someone at Chavez Supermarket on 5th Avenue reporting that a man identified as Kevin Michael Dolf had attempted to cash a bad check.

Deputies arrived and spot-

ted Mr. Dolf, who then fled west on foot toward the Jack in the Box restaurant at the corner of 5th Avenue and El Camino Real. He was caught there and arrested, deputies said.

Meanwhile, police in Menlo Park were investigating a residential burglary that had been reported at about 10 a.m. that day on Sharon Oaks Drive in Sharon Heights. In that case, the burglar had entered through an open garage door and had stolen several items from an unlocked vehicle in the garage.

The burglar then entered the home through an unlocked door in the garage and stole more items before fleeing, deputies said.

Mr. Dolf's arrest led to Menlo Park police recovering "the majority" of the property from the Sharon Oaks burglary, deputies said.

Deputies ask anyone with information on this incident to contact Sheriff's Office Detective Lisandro Lopez at 650-363-4055 or, via email, at lxlopez@smcgov.org.

The anonymous tip line is 1-800-547-2700.

County clerk sentenced for workers' comp fraud

A hidden video was the undoing of a San Mateo County medical-records file clerk who had been drawing workers' compensation benefits after convincing doctors she had suffered a work-related back injury.

The video showed Fremont resident Sunita Sagar, 46, "engaged in a very active lifestyle," including walking, bending and working without apparent difficulty at businesses that she owns, prosecutors said.

Ms. Sagar, who pleaded no contest in February to one count of felony workers' compensation fraud, was sentenced Aug. 21 to 120 days in county jail plus three years of supervised probation. In addition, she must pay the county \$54,773 in restitution.

She has been out of custody on \$50,000 bail.

Insurance fraud investigators looked into her situation after suspicions arose that she had faked her injury and was not "completely sedentary" and needing home care, prosecutors said.

After seeing the video, her physicians concluded that she had misrepresented her condition, prosecutors said. Her repayment includes the cost of the investigation.

Ms. Sagar's sentence, handed out by Superior Court Judge Craig Parsons, includes the loss of her Fourth Amendment search-and-seizure protections, a prohibition on owning weapons and ammunition, and a monthly probation fee of \$100, prosecutors said.

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City honors history association

Mayor Ray Mueller (center) and the City Council present the Menlo Park Historical Association on Aug. 19 with a proclamation recognizing its accomplishments since 1971 in preserving the history of Menlo Park and in making its archived materials available to the public, including through its website (tinyurl.com/history825). The association was instrumental in the creation of a friendship agreement between Menlo Park and Galway City, Ireland. Those in the photo, from left to right, are, council members (C) and history association members (A): Peter Ohtaki (C), Gil Workman (A), Rich Cline (C), Ester Bugna (A), Bill Weseloh (A), Ray Mueller (C), Jym Clendenin (A), Kirsten Keith (C), Lydia Dioli Cooper (A), Lucy Spaziano (A), Jim Lewis (A) and Catherine Carlton (C). Jym Clendenin is president of the history association.

Open space district meets on spending bond money

How will the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District spend money from a \$300 million bond measure approved by voters in June?

A plan to spend those proceeds is the topic of a study session by the district's Board of

Directors on Thursday, Aug. 28. The meeting starts at 5 p.m. in the district's board room at 330 Distel Circle in Los Altos.

General Manager Steve Abbors and Assistant General Manager Ana Ruiz will report on how the district plans to use

the bond measure money over the next two years.

Two more meetings on the bond measure are scheduled in September. On Sept. 10, the board will discuss how to prioritize bond-funded projects. On Sept. 24, the board will discuss the formation and makeup of a bond oversight committee.

Go to tinyurl.com/open828 to see the staff report on the bond measure in a PDF document.

■ POLICE CALLS

This information is from the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office and the Menlo Park Police Department. Under the law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent unless convicted. Police received the reports on the dates shown.

WOODSIDE

Accident report: A man driving westbound on La Honda Road in the vicinity of Skywood Lane "at a high rate of speed" lost control of his vehicle at about 9:45 p.m. The vehicle left the road and went over the north shoulder and down a steep wooded embankment and struck a tree. The driver suffered minor lacerations to his arms and complained of neck pain, but a passenger in the front seat had major injuries to his right arm and lacerations on his forehead. Both were taken to Stanford Hospital. Aug. 15.

Reckless driving report: A motorcyclist was cited after a deputy reportedly witnessed the motorcyclist traveling south in the northbound lane of Canada Road, running a stop sign at Glenwood Drive, and riding at speeds of at least 50 mph. Aug. 18.

Fraud report: Someone made unauthorized charges to the debit card of a Mountain Home Court resident at a Utah store known as "Musician's Friend." Estimated losses: \$326.97. Aug. 15.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Battery report: A "small argument" led to a fist fight between co-workers in the 300 block of Portola Road. One man was punched in the lip. The victim refused medical treatment and the alleged assailant left the scene. Aug. 15.

Accident report: A man in a truck was heading south on Willowbrook Drive when his truck's airbag inflated leading to the truck leaving the road, striking a tree and ricocheting into a brick mailbox, where it came to a stop. The vehicle had to be towed. Aug. 15.

WEST MENLO PARK

Residential Burglary report: Someone entered a fenced residential construction site on Valparaiso Avenue and stole tools. Estimated loss: \$3,400. Aug. 15.

MENLO PARK

Residential burglary report: Over a period of six weeks, someone has been stealing jewelry from a home in the 1700 block of Santa Cruz Avenue. An investigation is ongoing. Estimated losses: \$28,775. Aug. 21.

Theft reports:

■ Over a period of four months, someone stole VHS tapes, books and paperwork from a garage on Hillview Drive. No evidence of forced entry into the garage. Estimated loss: \$1,200. Aug. 18.

■ Mail stolen from a business complex on Menlo Avenue was found hidden in some bushes behind the complex. The mail had been opened and some mail was missing, including a package containing glue. Estimated loss: \$850. Aug. 16.

■ Someone stole a bicycle locked to a fence in the 400 block of El Camino Real. Estimated loss: \$700. Aug. 15.

■ Someone stole a bike that had been locked to a lamp post with a cable. Estimated loss: \$550. Aug. 19.

■ A FasTrak toll system device, registration cards and parking permits were stolen from a car parked on Waverley Street. Estimated loss: \$50. Aug. 19.

Fraud reports:

■ A resident of O'Brien Drive reported receiving a call from someone claiming to be from the Internal Revenue Service, telling her that she owed back taxes and that she could avoid by paying with a credit card. When the card was "declined," the "agent" told her to go to a CVS drugstore and buy a money order. The woman suspected fraud and called police. No losses. Aug. 15.

■ Someone obtained a Willow Road resident's checks and cashed two checks at a market. The checks bounced, which is how the resident found out about the theft. Aug. 20.

■ Someone stole a box of checks from a home on University Drive and cashed two. Estimated losses: \$237.72. Aug. 21.

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THE FENWOOD ESTATE - Victorian era estate's main house offers formal living room, dining room, grand ballroom, 7 bed, 4 bath, & open kitchen. Attached 4 story tower houses 2 bed, 2 bath, classic smoking/billiards room, & a top story kitchen. Guesthouse includes kitchenette & full bath. The 1.85 acre well manicured grounds offer beautiful trees & lush gardens.

Offered for \$12,750,000

Jakki Harlan . 650 465 2180 & Michael Oliver . 650 321 8902



Exclusive West Atherton Estate - 3.8 acres on prime West Atherton Street. 10,000 sf main house includes 5 bed, 5.5 bath, 3 car garage & 1 bd au pair unit w/ kitchen & bath. Indoor half basketball court & exercise area. Guest house includes 1 bed, 1.5 bath. Separate 3 car garage. Landscaped, secure yard with many areas for entertaining.

Offered for \$33,000,000

Susie Dews . 650 302 2639 & Shena Hurley . 650 575 0991



458 Selby Lane, Atherton - Highly coveted property is now available for the first time in over 20 years. Rare opportunity to own a flat 1.36 acre parcel surrounded by large estates in premier West Atherton location.

Offered for \$9,300,000

Susie Dews . 650 302 2639 & Shena Hurley . 650 575 0991

HOMWOOD
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TAHOE CITY WEST
530 581 1100

TAHOE CITY NORTH
530 581 5300

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