

The Almanac

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

JANUARY 14, 2022 | VOL. 57 NO. 19



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Local school districts report record numbers of COVID-19 cases

In a week, Sequoia district had four times as many cases as in all of fall semester

By Angela Swartz

Over 700 COVID-19 cases over just five days in one high school district. Staffing shortages. During the first week back from winter break, local schools began to report record numbers of COVID-19 cases among students and staff amid the emergence of the highly contagious omicron variant.

Late last week, San Mateo County amended quarantine and isolation guidelines to align with the new, more lax, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, which will result in shorter absences from school if someone tests positive or is exposed to the virus, which could help alleviate staffing challenges schools are facing.

The Sequoia Union High School District, which has roughly 11,000 students and staff members, reported a startling 710 cases its first week back, Jan. 3 to 7. That's more

than four times higher than the case count prior to winter break: the district reported there were about 175 cases in total during the entire fall semester.

The district updates its COVID-19 data dashboard every weekend.

Of the cases last week, 76 were among staff members, while 634 were among students. At 2,226-student Menlo-Atherton High School there were 191 cases (12 were staff). At the 1,752-student Woodside High School, there were 163 cases (9 were staff). At TIDE Academy in Menlo Park, there were 19 cases (three were staff).

"Once again, our country has been shaken by COVID-19 and its impact. While the country is paying close attention to omicron's next move, educational leaders are staying abreast of health updates and putting systems in place to support the safety of students and staff,"

See **SCHOOLS**, page 19



Magali Gauthier

Savannah Truby, a Woodside High School sophomore, swabs her nose at an on-campus COVID-19 test site on Jan. 10.

Menlo Park's city manager resigns just months before her planned retirement

The assistant city manager left for a Sunnyvale job on Dec. 31

By Kate Bradshaw

Menlo Park's city manager Starla Jerome-Robinson has resigned and will work no later than Jan. 28. The City Council appointed Deputy City Manager Justin Murphy as the city's new interim city manager on Jan. 11.

The news was announced by Genevieve Ng, legal counsel for the city, following a closed — not public — City Council session held Jan. 7.

Her resignation comes just months before her planned retirement. The move isn't

expected to materially alter her retirement benefits, she said.

"From my perspective, this is a strategic decision that helps provide continuity between the end date of my contract and the start date of the new city manager," she said in an email to The Almanac. "I care deeply about the community and the organization, and it was a difficult to make the decision to leave. I believe leaving early takes the time pressure off the City Council to make the new appointment and provides consistency for the organization. I highly regard Justin and know

he will do an outstanding job."

Jerome-Robinson leaves during a time of transition within the city's executive leadership. Among the 10 positions that are considered to be part of that executive team, there are four vacancies, not including the city manager role, she said. Of those, two are filled with interim or acting appointees.

Menlo Park's former Assistant City Manager, Nick Pegueros, no longer works for the city, and ended his tenure there on Dec. 31. He began work on Jan. 12 with the city of Saratoga as administrative services

director. In an email, he said that he has continued to "transition institutional knowledge" to Menlo Park's administrative services department since his separation from his previous role.

"It's a loss for the city that the city manager has decided to step down before her retirement, but I totally respect and understand the decision," Councilman Drew Combs told The Almanac. "As I reflect on the city manager's tenure I have to admit a degree of disappointment that some recent actions by my City Council

colleagues made a challenging job even more challenging. As Mr. Murphy assumes this role in an interim capacity, my hope is that he's afforded a bit more grace."

Among those actions was the decision by three council members, Mayor Betsy Nash, Vice Mayor Jen Wolosin and Councilwoman Cecilia Taylor, to hold a closed session meeting last October without the knowledge of then-Mayor Drew Combs' or Jerome-Robinson, to discuss a matter

See **CITY MANAGER**, page 17

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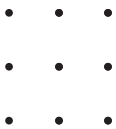
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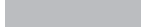
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Local News

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Magali Gauthier

Betsy Nash said that as Menlo Park mayor, she'll focus on revitalizing the downtown, climate issues and community outreach.

Betsy Nash, Menlo Park's new mayor, lays out her priorities

By Kate Bradshaw

Betsy Nash, Menlo Park's mayor for 2022, identified three key areas where she's hoping to use her role to make an impact: climate action, downtown revitalization and community outreach, she said in a recent interview.

Nash represents Menlo Park's District 4, which includes downtown, Allied Arts and a southern segment of El Camino Real.

"We've got so much on our plate now, and so many different transitions and opportunities. I really want to focus on what is already in front of us," she said.

A significant goal named in the city's 2030 climate action plan is to phase out gas power in buildings citywide, but how to do it is still being debated. "We need to find a way to electrify our buildings in Menlo Park," Nash said. The city is also in the running to receive a

\$50 million grant to help build levees along the city's Bayfront area to protect it from sea level rise.

In the area of downtown revitalization, community members can expect a number of changes in the coming year some of the projects that have been under construction near the city's downtown area will be finished, according to Nash. Those include the Springline

See **BETSY NASH**, page 15

Counties face a 'dramatic and breathtaking explosion' of COVID cases

By Sue Dremann

Santa Clara and San Mateo counties are now seeing more COVID-19 cases than at any other time during the pandemic, health officials told their respective boards of supervisors on Tuesday.

The current seven-day average of new positive cases in Santa Clara County now exceeds 4,000 per day, Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody said on Jan. 11. Those numbers don't include the COVID-19-positive antigen tests people are taking at home, which health officials have no way of tracking, she said.

Cody called the case rate a "dramatic and really breathtaking explosion of cases," adding that the peak of infections might not arrive for weeks. State models indicate it could be sometime in early February or later. After cases reach their highest level, hospitalizations are expected to peak.

"We're facing some very, very difficult weeks ahead," she said.

Wastewater surveillance, which the county uses to track the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus causing COVID-19 infections, has increased sharply in all four of its "sewersheds" in the past two weeks, she noted. The current concentration has surpassed last winter's surge.

San Mateo County Health Chief Louise Rogers said the load of positive cases is a challenge.

"We are working through a difficult period in every sector, resulting in strains on the systems we all rely on. This is the highest number of cases we have ever experienced," she said.

San Mateo County's rate soared from an average of 79 new cases per day last week to 905 this week. On some days, the county had between 1,000 and more than 1,500 positive cases, she said.

In both counties, people have been flocking to hospital emergency rooms for COVID-19 tests, when they failed to easily find test appointments elsewhere. Health care officials have been trying to redirect the test-seekers away from the ERs.

Cody and Rogers also said that vaccinations are significantly reducing hospitalizations. In a dramatic graph of hospitalizations by vaccination status of people ages 18 and older, Cody noted that the seven-day rolling average showed that hospitalizations among unvaccinated residents are 20 times higher compared with those who had been fully vaccinated in Santa Clara County.

Residents who didn't receive their boosters had twice the case rate of breakthrough infections over those who had received their booster shots, she said. So far, 789,129, or 60%, of eligible residents have received a booster shot. Overall, 82.5% of residents

See **COVID CASES**, page 16

Outdoor gathering spaces, fire safety and housing are top of mind for new Woodside mayor

By Angela Swartz

With a human population of around 7,000 and a horse population of about 800, Woodside is "a rural calm island in the middle of face-paced Silicon Valley," said 2022 Mayor Dick Brown.

Brown, who moved to Woodside in 2011 and joined the council in 2018, said one of his goals during his year as mayor is to not lose that sense of calm even as the town faces significant

increases in the number of units the state requires it to designate for development. The town was assigned 62 units last cycle and 328 units in the 2023-31 Regional Housing Needs Allocation.

"Our residents go to work in the high-tech business and they come home and breathe a sigh of relief," said Brown, whose term



Dick Brown

expires at the end of 2022.

Like most small towns in the area, Woodside is mostly planning on doing this by encouraging residents to build accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on their properties.

"We're not looking for a lot of 10-story high rises," he said. "We think we can accommodate that mostly with our ADUs. We have been exceeding what's been required up until this year."

Another hot button topic in town is the development of two residentially zoned parcels

of land in the Town Center, as called for by Measure A, which passed with a handful of votes (50.1%). After the votes were tallied, a old town resolution surfaced showing that the land along the Cañada and Woodside roads intersection, known as Cañada Corners and owned by George Roberts of Roberts Market, had been placed under an open space conservation easement. It's been proposed that this land be turned into parking and outdoor dining space. The other space, a town-owned

parcel near Town Hall, could be used to build a public building — a gazebo or amphitheater — for community events.

The Roberts have not brought a plan to the Town Council yet, but the council can choose not enforce an easement (or amend it), if members deem it to be for the public good.

"We have to be very cognizant of what the community wants," said Brown, a serial small business entrepreneur, who lived in

See **WOODSIDE MAYOR**, page 11

CRIME BRIEF

Atherton resident scares off attempted burglar

An Atherton resident scared off a person attempting to break into their home on Friday night, according to a town news bulletin.

Around 9:30 p.m. on Jan. 7, a would-be burglar climbed up the rain gutters at the back of a home on the 400 block of Walsh Road to try to break in, Sgt. Anthony Kockler said in an email. Police believe the intruder was scared off when the homeowner turned on backyard lights.

The suspect did not enter the home, but caused about \$500 worth of damage. There is no suspect description or security footage available, Kockler said.

Police believe the attempted burglar got onto the property through the Sharon Heights Golf Club.

In November, someone broke into a home on the same block in Atherton. The burglar broke a faucet in the process, causing “extensive water damage.”

There were 45 residential burglaries in 2021, and there has been one attempted residential burglary in 2022, Kockler said.

Anyone with information related to this case is asked to call the Atherton Police Department at 650-688-6500.

—Angela Swartz

Portola Valley Town Hall closed to visitors until Jan. 18

Portola Valley’s Town Hall will remain closed until Tuesday, Jan. 18, while staff works remotely.

The town hopes the closure will help curb the rapid spread of the omicron variant.

Online resident services are available at portolavalley.net.

Las Lomas district bond oversight committee recruiting

The Las Lomas Elementary School District is searching for a community member to serve on the Citizens’ Oversight Committee for Bond Measures.

Find the application on llesd.org and email the completed application to mchan@llesd.org.

Part-time roles in the Las Lomas district

The Las Lomas Elementary School District is hiring for various part-time positions, including substitute teachers, bus drivers, para educators and playground monitors.

Apply at edjoin.org/llesd.

Vaping talk on Jan. 19

Erin Vogel, a senior research associate, at University of Southern California’s Keck School of Medicine will speak on how teenage use of tobacco, e-cigarettes, and vapes has changed during the pandemic on Wednesday, Jan. 19, from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

The online talk will also touch on how social media influences the health behaviors of adolescents. Simultaneous Spanish interpretation will be available.

The San Mateo County Office of Education Tobacco Use Education program, Sequoia Union High School District, Sequoia Healthcare District, Peninsula Health Care District and The Parent Venture are sponsoring the presentation.

Register at erinvogel2022smcoetupe.eventbrite.com.

—Angela Swartz

State temporarily loosens rules for substitute teachers

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Tuesday, Jan. 11, signed an executive order relaxing state regulations around the hiring of substitute teachers as districts grapple with staffing shortages exacerbated by the omicron variant of the coronavirus.

“We’re working closely with local education officials to cut red tape to allow qualified substitute teachers to help maintain safe learning environments,” Newsom said in a news release.

Through March 31, the executive order allows for temporary certificates to be issued to substitute teachers who don’t

See **COMMUNITY BRIEFS**, page 11

TOWN OF WOODSIDE
2955 WOODSIDE ROAD, WOODSIDE, CA 94062

VOLUNTEER FOR TOWN COMMITTEES

ARTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE – Meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday at 5:00 p.m.; 2-year term; strengthens community involvement by initiating, sponsoring, and celebrating local art and cultural activities including, art, photography, design, music, horticulture, culinary arts, literature, drama, and dance; organizes and supervises events showcasing local creative talent.

CIRCULATION COMMITTEE – Meets monthly on the 4th Thursday at 8:00 p.m.; 2-year term; supports the General Plan goal to foster a community of all users of the public roadway system; works with the Town Engineer, Sheriff’s Department, and local and regional organizations to encourage “share the road” programs; develops educational programs on traffic safety, promotes safe, convenient access to schools, businesses, public and private institutions, and neighborhoods.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS COMMITTEE – Meets monthly on the 2nd Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.; 2-year term; supports the General Plan Policies related to education on natural hazards and emergency preparedness; develops and maintains appropriate plans and procedures with staff to respond to disasters and emergencies; supports the Citizens’ Emergency Response and Preparedness Program.

ENVIRONMENT: OPEN SPACE, CONSERVATION & SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE – Meets monthly on the 4th Thursday at 5:30 p.m.; 2-year term; advises and assists the Town Council, Planning Commission, and staff on implementing the goals and policies of the environmental elements of the General Plan: Open Space, Conservation, and Sustainability.

LIVESTOCK AND EQUESTRIAN HERITAGE COMMITTEE – Meets monthly on the 4th Wednesday at 5:30 p.m.; 2-year term; reviews applications for professional stable permits and forwards recommendations to the Planning Commission; reviews applications for exceptions to the private stable regulations, forwards recommendations to the Planning Director, and conducts stable inspections in accordance with the Municipal Code; develops and supports education and information programs which aid the community in sustaining, protecting, enhancing, and enjoying equestrian activities and facilities.

RECREATION COMMITTEE – Meets monthly on the 1st Thursday at 6:00 p.m.; 3-year term; guides the activities of the community recreation program. The Committee provides organized and supervised community recreation services in all areas of the Town and makes recreation budget recommendations to the Council.

TRAILS COMMITTEE – Meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday at 3:00 p.m.; 2-year term; reviews land divisions, subdivisions and conditional use permits for locations for equestrian, pedestrian and bicycle trails and makes recommendations to the staff and to the Planning Commission; advises on trail maintenance projects and on rules, regulations and ordinances pertaining to the trails.

THE VOLUNTEERISM/VOLUNTEER LIAISON AND ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE – Meets as needed; 2-year term; encourages citizen volunteer participation, including by direct recruitment; assists with volunteer recognition; and researches, implements and administers recommendations; liaises with Town Staff, other volunteer committees, various local school groups and the general public to implement ideas and projects.

WOODSIDE HISTORY COMMITTEE – Meets monthly on the 2nd Thursday at 10:30 a.m.; 2-year term; advises the Town Council and staff regarding actions, policies and plans relating to historic preservation; plans and recommends means for ensuring the security and public accessibility of the Town’s historic archives; gathers and catalogues historic material.

These are volunteer positions and serve in an advisory capacity to the Town Council. Interested residents may request information and applications from the Town Clerk’s Office at Town Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, or email: mcardinale@woodsidetown.org. The deadline for applications is Friday, January 28, 2022, by 5 p.m.

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The Almanac (ISSN 1097-3095 and USPS 459370) is published every Friday by Embarcadero Media, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-6558. Periodicals Postage Paid at Menlo Park, CA and at additional mailing offices. Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation for San Mateo County. The Almanac is delivered to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside. However, in order to continue delivering you the news you depend on, we encourage you to become a paid subscribing member. Go to AlmanacNews.com/subscribe to start supporting The Almanac today.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-6558.

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As COVID-19 cases spike, demand on county hospitals is 'challenging but manageable'

By Astrid Casimire/
Bay City News

Despite a surge of COVID-19 cases related to the new omicron variant, San Mateo County health officials say the hospital situation in the county is "challenging but manageable."

During a meeting of the county's Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Jan. 11, San Mateo County Health chief Louise Rogers said that while health care workers are being affected by the virus, hospitals are not being impacted as badly as last winter.

"We're still not at the level of last winter when we were actually over 200 in the hospital," Rogers said. Even then, hospitals were able to meet the high demand.

Now, as of Monday, there are 116 confirmed and suspected COVID-19 patients at county hospitals.

"We're seeing that most of the demand is ... not for (intensive care unit) beds, and that we've been able collectively to maintain capacity," Rogers said.

Rogers said that hospitals can still increase capacity if needed as they have not taken steps such as canceling elective procedures.

However, amid the biggest surge in cases since the pandemic began, health care providers, pharmacies and county facilities are struggling to meet the high demand for testing.

According to Rogers, the county has a 16% test positivity rate. And in the past week, some days reported more than 1,000 positive cases. This may not even reflect the true number of positive cases.

"Many more residents than that are learning of a positive result through a positive rapid antigen test, which as you all know is not reflected in the data," Rogers said.

Some people have even been going to hospital emergency rooms with mild symptoms or to get tested, a practice that Rogers discouraged.

In response, the county has added more testing sites and ordered more test kits, such as 50,000 at-home antigen test kits which will be distributed to low-income families with young children, medically vulnerable residents and workers in care settings.

Schools have also upped their testing numbers, according to County Superintendent of Schools Nancy Magee.

Magee also said that the transmission rate in schools is "relatively low" as the virus is not being spread at schools themselves.

"Most of the infections are happening in family environments, in family gatherings, out in public activities and not within the school community itself," Magee said, adding that they are committed to keeping the county's schools open.

Despite the surge, Rogers is optimistic that the county's high vaccination rates create a "wall of immunity" that protects people from severe illness, hospitalizations and deaths.

As of Monday, Jan. 10, 92% of county residents ages 5 and older have received at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Rogers, along with the county supervisors, encouraged people to get vaccinated, get the booster shot, wear masks and stay home when sick.

A list of testing sites is available at smcgov.org/testing.

San Mateo County COVID-19 data and information are available at smchealth.org/coronavirus-health-data.

COVID-19 data for school districts in the county is available online at smcoe.org. ■



Courtesy San Mateo County

Suja Georgie, an internal medicine specialist at San Mateo Medical Center, receives COVID-19 vaccine on Dec. 18, 2020. County officials are optimistic that high vaccination rates will protect county residents from hospitalizations and death amid surging case numbers.

Community college district vice chancellor strikes a deal, pleads no contest to two felonies

Jose Nuñez faced 15 felonies, including embezzlement and perjury; investigation into college district is ongoing

By Bay City News Service

A San Mateo County Community College District vice chancellor has pleaded no contest to two felonies for using district resources for political purposes, San Mateo County prosecutors said Jan. 6.

Jose Nuñez, 69, entered the plea Jan. 5 as part of an agreement to cooperate with the county District Attorney's Office in its investigation into the college district and to testify as a witness in any court proceedings.

Nuñez, who has served as the vice chancellor of facilities for 21 years at the district that oversees Skyline College, Cañada College in Woodside



Jose Nuñez

and the College of San Mateo, was charged last month with 15 felonies, including embezzlement and perjury.

The embezzlement charges were related to the awarding of a contract for a solar photovoltaic project at Cañada College while the perjury charges were for his alleged failure to report various gifts from district vendors over more than a decade, according to the District Attorney's Office.

Prosecutors dropped those charges as part of the plea agreement, in which Nuñez admitted to using district resources for political purposes for the election of a district board member and for a bond measure for district projects.

He remains out of custody but faces a maximum sentence of three years and eight months in prison for the two felonies pending his cooperation in any

future court proceedings in the District Attorney's Office investigation into the district.

Nuñez's defense attorney declined to comment on the plea agreement.

Following the announcement of charges filed against Nuñez in December, Ana Maria Pulido, director of public affairs for the community college district, said Nuñez is on administrative leave pending the legal process.

"The College District has an unwavering commitment to integrity, transparency, and accountability and supports the District Attorney's goal of ensuring that these standards are met by all public officials," Pulido said. "The College District has cooperated with the investigation, and will continue to be available to the District Attorney's Office."

The case was continued to July 15 to set a date for sentencing. ■

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The Almanac Holiday Fund is a donor advised fund of Silicon Valley Community Foundation, a 501 (c) (3) charitable organization. A contribution to this fund allows your donation to be tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Boys & Girls Clubs

Provides after-school academic support, enrichment, and mentoring for 1,800 low-income K-12 youth at nine locations across Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, and the North Fair Oaks neighborhood of Redwood City.

Ecumenical Hunger Program

Provides emergency food, clothing, household essentials, and sometimes financial assistance to families in need, regardless of religious preference, including Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for more than 2,000 households.

Fair Oaks Community Center

This multi-service facility, serving the broader Redwood City community, provides assistance with child care, senior programs, citizenship and immigration, housing and employment, and crisis intervention. Programs are available in Spanish and English

LifeMoves

Provides shelter/housing and supportive services across 18 sites in Silicon Valley and the Peninsula. Serves thousands of homeless families and individuals annually on their path back to permanent housing and self-sufficiency.

Literacy Partners — Menlo Park

Supports literacy programs and projects through fundraising and community awareness. Helps community members enhance their reading, writing and related skills and education to improve their economic, professional and personal wellbeing.

Ravenswood Family Health Center

Provides primary medical and preventive health care for all ages at its clinic in East Palo Alto. Of the more than 17,000 registered patients, most are low-income and uninsured and live in the ethnically diverse East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, and North Fair Oaks areas.

Second Harvest Food Bank

The largest collector and distributor of food on the Peninsula, Second Harvest Food Bank distributed 52 million pounds of food last year. It gathers donations from individuals and businesses and distributes food to more than 250,000 people each month through more than 770 agencies and distribution sites in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room

Serves hundreds of hot meals six days a week to people in need who walk through the doors. Funded by voluntary contributions and community grants, St. Anthony's is the largest dining room for the needy between San Francisco and San Jose. It also offers take-home bags of food, as well as emergency food and clothing assistance.

StarVista

Serves more than 32,000 people throughout San Mateo County, including children, young people and families, with counseling, prevention, early intervention, education, and residential programs. StarVista also provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services including a 24-hour suicide crisis hotline, an alcohol and drug helpline, and a parent support hotline.

Upward Scholars

Empowers low-income adults by providing them with financial support, tutoring, and other assistance so they can continue their education, get higher-paying jobs, and serve as role models and advocates for their children.

Thank you for donating to the Holiday Fund



Almanac Holiday Fund Donor List

As of Jan. 7th, 149 donors have contributed \$259,569 to the Almanac Holiday Fund.

18 Anonymous \$11,348

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* Donor did not want to publish the amount of the gift.



Magali Gauthier

Volunteer Amy Galindo places dry goods into food packages that will be handed out to clients at Ecumenical Hunger Program in East Palo Alto on Nov. 22. EHP is one of 10 local nonprofits that benefit from contributions to The Almanac Holiday Fund.

'Stunned by this generosity': Anonymous donor gives \$350,000 to Holiday Fund

Almanac and Palo Alto Weekly charitable-giving campaigns benefit from the largest-ever donation in their history

A Silicon Valley philanthropist has made the largest-ever donation to the Almanac Holiday Fund and the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund: \$350,000, shared by the two charitable programs.

Working through the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, the philanthropist asked to remain anonymous while giving \$250,000 to the Weekly's and \$100,000 to the Almanac's funds.

Both annual campaigns raise money to support the vital work of local nonprofit organizations that serve kids, families and individuals in need.

"We're stunned by this generosity," said Bill Johnson, president and CEO of the Almanac's parent company, Embarcadero Media. "We would like to thank this individual or family for showing such care and compassion during these very difficult pandemic times. The enormity of these gifts will enable the Holiday Fund to provide tangible help to many more nonprofits and significantly improve the lives of even more of our neighbors."

This year, the Almanac Holiday

Fund sought to raise \$200,000.

"It's safe to say that, with this donation, that goal has been blown out of the water," Johnson said. "We couldn't be more appreciative."

Every year, hundreds of local residents contribute to the Holiday Fund. Since the Almanac and Silicon Valley Community Foundation absorb all of the costs of the program, every dollar that is donated

is distributed without any overhead or expenses deducted.

Last year, Almanac readers and foundations contributed \$260,000, which was distributed equally among 10 nonprofit agencies.

In addition to individual gifts, the Holiday Fund program has enjoyed ongoing support from the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

To make a contribution or see a list of the nonprofits supported by the Holiday Fund, go online to almanacnews.com/holiday_fund.

—Almanac staff



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DONATE ONLINE: siliconvalleycf.org/almanac-holiday-fund

Lawsuit filed against city of Menlo Park over utility taxes

By Kate Bradshaw

Menlo Park residents David Fogel, Kirill Pertsev and Kaitlin Darke have filed a class action lawsuit looking for a refund of utility users taxes from the city of Menlo Park, alleging that the City Council has failed to properly reauthorize the tax collection since 2014.

Menlo Park's Utility Users Tax (UUT) was approved by voters in 2006 and imposes a maximum 3.5% tax on gas, electrical and water usage and a maximum 2.5% tax on cable, telephone and wireless services, according to the city website. The taxes are collected by the utility service providers and sent monthly to the city's finance division.

The taxes, which have been set at 1% since 2007, also set a cap of \$12,000 for the total amount a user can pay for electric, gas and water utilities. In the 20-21 fiscal year, the city collected about \$1.4 million in utility users taxes, and the amount collected annually since the 2012-13 fiscal year has generally fluctuated between roughly \$1.1 million and \$1.7 million.

An Oct. 28 demand letter by attorney James Pistorino on behalf of Fogel, Pertsev and Darke states that these residents are demanding that the city stop collecting utility users tax and provide a refund.

According to the lawsuit, filed Dec. 28, each person who

paid Menlo Park's utility users tax past Dec. 31, 2016, "is entitled to a refund (with interest) of all such monies paid."

When asked whether Menlo Park residents might see a tax refund in their future, City Attorney Nira Doherty said in an email to The Almanac, "The City now has the opportunity to file a responsive pleading to the class action lawsuit. The lawsuit is in the very early stages; any determinations on the allegations, including those related to a tax refund, would be premature."

At the time the tax was approved in 2006, Pistorino writes in the initial demand letter, those pushing to have the measure passed argued that the city faced a recurring budget deficit of \$2.2 million and needed the utility users taxes to avoid "drastic cuts" and help pay for police, emergency preparedness, libraries, street repairs, park maintenance and senior and youth programs. The law passed by a narrow 67-vote majority.

In the municipal code, it says that the tax would need to be reviewed every two years, and to be reauthorized, the City Council would have to, by a two-thirds majority, make findings that the tax is "necessary for the financial health of the city." If it didn't, the tax would be terminated at the end of the calendar year. That's what happened when the council allegedly neglected to reauthorize the tax any time

after 2016, Pistorino argues.

Furthermore, under the California Constitution, it says that governments are not permitted to "impose, extend, or increase any general tax unless and until that tax is submitted to the electorate and approved by a majority vote." Since Menlo Park voters haven't voted on it since the tax allegedly lapsed, the city is allegedly in violation of the state constitution, the lawsuit claims.

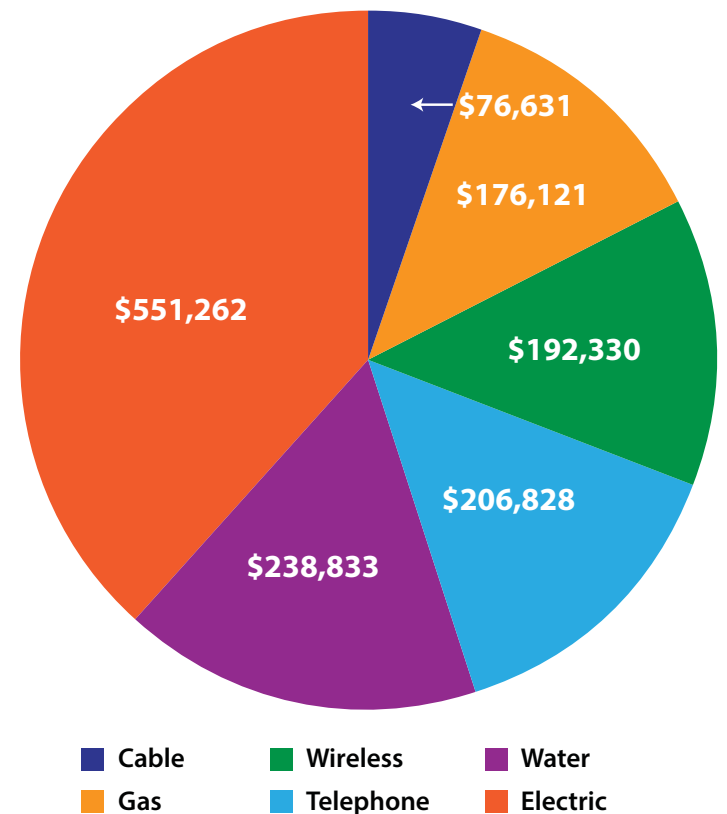
According to Pistorino, citing city documents he obtained, the City Council made the needed findings in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014, but hadn't been made in 2016 or any year beyond that, and as a result, the UUT would have expired at the end of 2016 — which, by extension, means that any taxes collected after then were illegally collected.

The group bring forward the lawsuit is making it a class action lawsuit on behalf of all of the households who paid the utility users tax after its authorization lapsed; estimated to be more than 12,000 households or entities, according to the legal complaint.

The lawsuit requests that the judge determine that the UUT is no longer in effect, bar the city from collecting any more UUT, order the city to refund those taxes, including interest, and award the plaintiffs and class members litigation expenses and legal relief.

The claimants' research into the UUT began after Aug. 31,

Menlo Park Utility Users Tax 2020-21



Data courtesy city of Menlo Park

Of the roughly \$1.4 million the city of Menlo Park collected in utility users taxes in the 2020-21 fiscal year, a majority came from electric and water uses.

2021, when now Mayor Betsy Nash, Vice Mayor Jen Wolosin and Councilwoman Cecilia Taylor expressed favor toward increasing the utility users tax to the maximum 3.5% up from the current 1% rate to generate funds to help low-income households replace gas power

with electric power. The votes "prompted increased scrutiny of the UUT itself and, as a result, this demand letter," Pistorino wrote. ■

Email Staff Writer Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com.

Council pays \$3.9 million for parking lot to build new Caltrain crossing

By Kate Bradshaw

As part of a long-term plan to help make Menlo Park more navigable for people traveling on bike or foot, the city has for years been working on a plan to build a Caltrain undercrossing at Middle Avenue.

That project took a step forward Jan. 11 when the City Council voted unanimously to spend roughly \$3.9 million to

purchase a parking lot along the Caltrain tracks near the current Big 5 location at 700 El Camino Real, a site that's considered critical for installing the planned undercrossing ramp to descend beneath the train tracks.

The city has to pay the fair market value for the lot, which was estimated to be \$210 per square foot, plus more for whatever assets exist there, and agreed to pay additional fees for construction easements to access the property while the undercrossing is being built.

Current estimates for the project now place it at \$20 million; up from the \$10 million estimated when Stanford agreed to pay 50% of the cost "up to \$5 million," according to the staff report, as part of its proposal to provide community benefits in exchange for development rights at its new Middle Plaza development project under way at 500 El Camino Real.

Beyond funding already set

aside for the project, there is currently about a \$7.5 million funding shortfall, according to staffers. They are continuing "to explore sources of revenue" to build the project, including from the federal level, regional and state grant programs or local funding sources like transportation impact fees, Measure A or Measure W funds.

The council also took action Jan. 11 to join forces with a county on a project to study how to improve bike and pedestrian safety for kids and other street users along Coleman and Ravenswood avenues and to join Commute.org, a countywide joint powers effort aimed at encouraging alternatives to solo driving commutes.

Council OKs joint safe routes study with county

A project to study how to improve bike and pedestrian safety at Coleman and

Ringwood Avenues in Menlo Park passed a milestone when the City Council voted Jan. 11 to dedicate \$225,000 and agree to split costs with the county of San Mateo, paying one-third of costs while the county pays the other two-thirds. The vote was 4-0 in favor, with Councilman Ray Mueller absent.

There are a number of schools near those streets, yet in the unincorporated area of Coleman avenue, there are no sidewalks, and on both sides of the street there are no bike facilities. The county and city aim to work together with a consultant to develop preferred concept designs for Ringwood Avenue between Middlefield Road and Bay Road and Coleman Avenue between Ringwood Avenue and Willow Road, with public engagement and outreach along the way, including the development of a technical advisory committee and a community advisory committee, according

to a staff report.

The consultant firm, W-Trans, proposes to start the project in February and come up with a final study for approval by the county Board of Supervisors and City Council by summer 2023. Funding comes from the countywide 2018 eighth-cent sales tax measure, Measure W, aimed at boosting safety, fixing potholes and congestion relief.

Menlo Park to join Commute.org

The council also voted 4-0 Jan. 11, with Mueller absent, to join Commute.org, also known as the "Peninsula Traffic Congestion Relief Alliance," which helps local employers to increase employee biking, walking, carpooling, and taking transit or sharing vans or shuttles to get to work. The group was organized in 2000 and over the years 17

See **MENLO COUNCIL**, page 16

LEHUA GREENMAN



"And suddenly you know: It's time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings."

650.245.1845 COMPASS

WOODSIDE MAYOR

continued from page 5

Atherton for 35 years before moving to Woodside. He suggested the town host focus groups on what they'd like to see done with the town-owned property.

"We need to make sure the parking stays as rural as we can. ... We don't have a mandate," he said, adding that he is confident they can find a way to make it happen that is not going to "antagonize the 49.9% who said 'no.'"

"I never dreamed the vote

would be that close," Brown said.

With the increased amount of outdoor dining in town during the pandemic, there is a lot more traffic in the Town Center area, he noted, and Measure A should help with building additional parking capacity.

Fire safety is also on Brown's mind this year. Although no one in Portola Valley or Woodside was forced to evacuate because of the nearby CZU August Lighting Complex fires that burned over 86,000 acres, it was a wake-up

call to the two small wooded towns that fire danger needs to remain top of mind. And fires are at the forefront of the minds of local officials and residents as temperatures rise.

Brown said that there is extreme fire danger on the hillsides and if the wind hadn't changed direction, Woodside could have been consumed.

"We want to try to work more with the county, state and federal government to get more funding and programs in place to build a significant barrier," he said.

In 2021, Woodside increased its police budget — by a little under \$63,000 — to help address the volume of traffic in a town that's en route to the beach and popular destination for cyclists in the summer months, he said.

Neighboring Atherton has installed nearly 50 automated license plate readers to combat a recent string of residential burglars. Although Woodside hasn't seen a similar spike in crime, the Town Council will consider installing its own. Since the town is surrounded by others with license plate

readers (including Portola Valley and Palo Alto), Woodside could become a target for such crime since they don't have any, Brown said.

Finally, he said he hopes to bring back annual events like Woodside's May Day Parade and the Fourth of July rodeo that have been canceled since the pandemic began.

"We can all get out and celebrate what's special about Woodside," he said. ▀

Email Staff Writer Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

continued from page 6

have credentials. The order also extends the length of time substitute teachers can be assigned to a class to 120 days and allows more flexibility for retired teachers to work as substitutes.

Districts must submit a "written finding" that the more flexible rules will allow them to maintain in-person instruction despite staffing shortages.

Anti-price gouging order for home COVID tests

Gov. Gavin Newsom signed an executive order this weekend aimed at preventing price gouging on COVID-19 at-home test kits, which are in high demand due to the omicron variant surge.

The order generally prohibits sellers from increasing prices on the test kits by more than 10%.

State Attorney General Rob Bonta issued a consumer alert following the governor's signing of the order and encouraged anyone who has been a victim of price-gouging on at-home COVID-19 test kits to file a complaint with his office or contact local law enforcement.

"Californians are doing their part to confront this challenge — whether by caring for loved ones, getting vaccinated, or working on the front lines — and they shouldn't have to worry about being cheated while dealing with the effects of coronavirus," Bonta said.

The order signed by Newsom prohibits sale of at-home COVID-19 test kits at a price that exceeds, by more than 10%, the price the seller charged for the item on Dec. 1, 2021.

Sellers who haven't previously sold at-home COVID-19 test kits may not sell them for 50% more than what the seller paid for them.

Violation of the order is a misdemeanor punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment for up to six months, or both. Violations would also constitute a violation of the Unfair Competition Law, which is subject to a \$2,500 per violation civil penalty.

Price-gouging complaints can be filed at oag.ca.gov/report.

Stanford Blood Center seeks donors amid a shortage

Stanford Blood Center is seeking new blood donors in light of a significant increase in cancellations from the current COVID-19 surge, wrote Harpreet Sandhu, executive director of the center, in a letter on Tuesday.

Sandhu said the center only has a few days of blood on hand as regular donors are falling ill and companies initiate stricter visitor onsite policies.

"At the same time, demand at the hospitals has increased, and shows no signs of slowing down in the coming weeks," Sandhu said in a statement.

New donors can check their eligibility at 888-723-7831 or stanfordbloodcenter.org/eligibility. Appointments can be made online at sbcdonor.org.

—Bay City News Service

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include **Alfred Neiman**, 90, a longtime Menlo Park resident and board member of the Ladera Community Association, on Dec. 22; **Katherine Sonett Kahrs**, 95, a former Menlo Park resident; and **John MacDonald Oda-Burns**, 90, former rector of Christ Church Portola Valley Woodside, on Jan. 1.

To read the full obituary, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at almanacnews.com/obituaries.

Birt Harvey

November 24, 1928 – December 20, 2021

Birt Harvey died in his home on December 20, 2021. He was 93. He had a remarkable life, touching the lives of countless children and families along the way.

Birt was born in Teheran to Ethel LaVal and Mansoor Moghtader. When he was 6 months old, the family returned to New York. He grew up a solid Giants fan, walking to games at the Polo Grounds as a young child. He attended Manhasset High School where he played lacrosse and ran track. He got his undergraduate degree from Johns Hopkins University and then attended NYU medical school, where he met and married his wife of 60 wonderful years, Doris Roberts. After an internship in Denver, two years in the Air Force in Ohio, and the birth of their first son, they moved to San Francisco where he completed his pediatric residency at Stanford and added two more children to the family. The family moved back to NYC where he completed a chief residency at Babies Hospital at Columbia. They had planned to remain in New York, but their enjoyment of their time in Palo Alto, the challenges of bundling multiple babies into snowsuits every morning plus the relocation of the Giants from New York to San Francisco were enough to woo the family back to a pediatric practice on Welch Road. Shortly after the move to Palo Alto, a fourth and fifth child were added to the family.

Dr. Harvey took care of children in a private practice in Palo Alto for 30 years. During much of that time, he ran the pediatric pulmonary clinic at Stanford and took on roles that enabled him to advocate for children's health needs. He was instrumental in setting up the Child Health and Disability Prevention program which funds well child visits for millions of lower income children in California. Dr. Harvey served on the American Board of Pediatrics, was elected President of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and was a member of the National Academy of Medicine and of the American Pediatric Society. He chaired the Board of Trustees of the Johnson and Johnson Pediatric Institute and was on the boards of the Children's Environmental Health Network and the

Children's Advocacy Institute, as well as on advisory committees to the CDC and the EPA. Over the years, Dr. Harvey served on the Voluntary Clinical Faculty at Stanford and at UCSF before eventually joining the full time faculty at Stanford as Professor and Associate Chair in the Department of Pediatrics. He published many articles and book chapters, as well as serving on several editorial boards and as Associate Editor of the journal, Pediatrics. He received numerous awards for his outstanding service. He also provided exceptional pediatric care to many many local kids, specializing in treating children with cystic fibrosis.

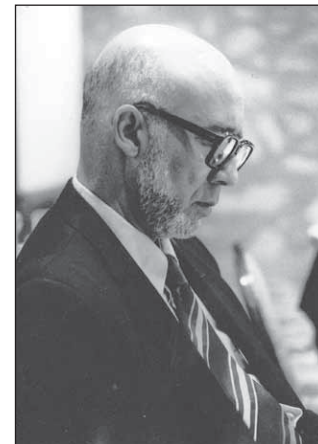
Beyond his career accomplishments, Birt knew how to have a good time. He and Doris had a supportive, caring, complimentary relationship. Together, they enjoyed TheatreWorks, the San Francisco Ballet, the Symphony, and traveling, managing to see over 50 countries. After Doris's death in 2011, he continued to travel until COVID restrictions made it impossible. Birt additionally enjoyed Giants games and loved his weekly poker nights. He read voraciously and enjoyed his book group. More recently, he enjoyed playing bridge. He moved to the Vi, a senior living facility, in 2013 and was fortunate to find love again, enjoying the company of Gayle Riggs for the remainder of his life. While he lived at the Vi, his social life flourished — so much so that his family always had to plan far ahead to reserve a spot in his busy social calendar.

He is survived by his five children: Brit (Jamie Chau), Kim (Kevin Coleman), Ann (Francesca Cunningham), Paul and Tom, and his granddaughters, Allison (Kartik Darapuneni) and Megan Coleman and Colina Harvey, his brother John (Madeline) and nephew, Grant (Elizabeth).

We all love and miss him dearly, but take comfort in knowing that his was definitely a life well lived and full of love.

We will likely have a gathering to celebrate his life sometime in the spring, COVID allowing.

In lieu of flowers please donate to a charity of your choice, preferably one that supports children.



PAID OBITUARY

Lasting Memories

An online directory of obituaries.

AlmanacNews.com/obituaries

Sequoia district officials to make plea for 'immediate' government aid amid COVID surge

District also bumps pay for teachers covering for absent colleagues

By Angela Swartz

With a surge of COVID-19 cases, the Sequoia Union High School District governing board planned to meet Jan. 13 to urge government officials to "immediately" dedicate emergency public health workers and funding to the district amid staffing shortages, a need for help administering COVID-19 tests and more. The teachers union head is also reporting that the district is increasing pay for teachers who cover absent teachers' classes.

The district reported a startling 710 cases just last week upon students' return from

winter break.

A resolution, which the board was set to vote on Thursday afternoon after The Almanac's press deadline, asks the state and federal government to deploy emergency public health care workers and staff to the district so it can have adequate COVID-19 tests, testing services, vaccination clinics and medical services.

The resolution notes that California's public schools are not staffed, funded and "adequately trained" to provide public health department services. The district also needs the state to offer additional COVID-19-related leave to employees who have to quarantine if they

test positive, the district said.

According to the resolution: "Contact tracing, COVID-19 testing, monitoring of students' and staffs' symptoms of potential illness, safety mitigation resources, and safety protocol mandates have burdened public school staff with additional responsibilities well beyond their staffing, funding, resources, and training, and have thereby shifted the focus of public schools, teachers, and staff from educating students to instead prioritizing the performance of public health department duties and functions."

As a result, school districts are straining under the staffing shortages and demands caused by the pandemic. "Immediate and significant staff and support from state and federal agencies and officials is an emergency need for our public schools," the resolution said.

On Jan. 12, Superintendent Darnise Williams said in a statement that "given the ever-evolving reality created by COVID, it is critical that the community



Magali Gauthier

Sequoia Union High School District Superintendent Darnise Williams takes a COVID-19 test at Woodside High School on Jan. 10.

view the steps the district is taking to keep our schools safe."

Teacher pay

The Sequoia District Teachers Association (SDTA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Wednesday morning, Jan. 12, to raise the pay rate for teachers who cover another teacher's class, according to

teachers union president Edith Salvatore, in an email.

With this MOU, the district is recognizing the much "higher rate of in-house coverage" that members are providing and they have set the compensation at \$75 per 50-minute period and \$150 for an 85-minute "block" period, retroactive to the beginning of the school year and lasting through the end of the year, she said.

By contract, the rate for an SDTA bargaining unit member to cover the vacant class for a colleague is set at 25% of the daily sub rate (50% for a block class). At the beginning of this school year, that meant that teachers were earning \$41.25 daily/\$82.50 for a block class. In November, the district raised the sub rate to \$240/day, meaning coverage rates went up to \$60/\$120 by contract.

"We have only just communicated this to our members, but I believe it will help morale," Salvatore said. "And while we agree that the state or federal government should definitely be providing COVID sick leave (since it is, at this point, the price of doing business if the state wishes to keep schools 'open' for in-person learning), we don't think the district should wait for that to be resolved before committing to cover COVID absences for our members who have been forced to quarantine already this year."

If the state agrees to provide leave, the budgets can be adjusted back, but it's important that members know now that their accumulated leave will be kept intact or, if they've already exhausted that leave, that they won't have their daily pay deducted should they be

Alfred Neiman

September 29, 1931 – December 22, 2021

Al Neiman, of Ladera, passed away on December 22, 2021 at 90 years old. Many words can be used to describe Al. Husband, father, grandfather, veteran, coach, engineer, handyman, bridge player, 49er fan, dog lover. Born in St. Louis in 1931 to Sam and Josephine, Al went on to earn his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Metallurgical Engineering at the Missouri University of Science and Technology. He spent two years in the Army which brought him out to California where he met his wife Ingrid and they settled in Menlo Park (Ladera resident since 1968). Together they raised five children, Michael, Gary, Tamara, Jeff and Mark. (Spouses: Nancy, Karen, Randy Cook, Jodi and Stacy). As a child of the Great Depression, Al instilled in his kids the value of a dollar, and that if you had to go without a hot dog, peanut butter was a good substitute to add to the ketchup and mustard. He taught his kids to drive, change the oil, make scrambled eggs and how to tie a tie. He coached baseball and soccer, along with being a constant presence at swim meets and tennis tournaments. As the years passed, he continued sitting on the sidelines cheering on many of his ten grandchildren: Andrew, Dylan, Nicole, Adam, Thomas, Danielle, Madison, Jacob, Sarina and Jordan. He loved being with his family and was always happy lending his advice on home improvements and his specialty, what kind of car to purchase, with Internet research being his forte! He truly enjoyed a good meal, especially if it involved corned beef and chocolate ice cream. With Ingrid and other family members and friends, he went on numerous cruises and of course, the buffets were a highlight. Al spent 37 years at Lockheed before retiring. With five kids and a job, he still found time to play tennis, golf and bridge. Even during the pandemic, he continued playing bridge on-line. Al also gave back to the community, serving on the board of the Ladera Community Association and teaching his fellow seniors computer skills and bridge at Menlo Park's Little House. And it goes without saying that Al adored his dogs. He would feed, groom and play with them and they showed their love back by sleeping at his side. Donations in Al's memory can be made to Peninsula Humane Society/SPCA at www.phs-sPCA.org.



PAID OBITUARY

John Macdonald Oda-Burns

1931 – 2022

The Rev. John Macdonald Oda-Burns, retired rector of Christ Church Portola Valley, died on January 1, 2022 with family by his side.

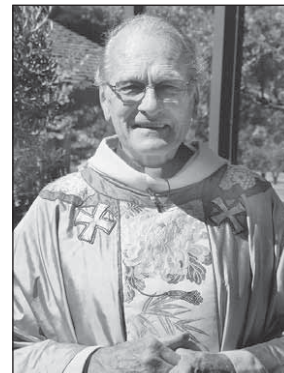
Born in Exeter, Devon on June 18, 1931, John was educated at Exeter School, and read theology at King's College London before serving in the Royal Artillery in Hong Kong. He returned to England to attend seminary at St. Boniface Theological College, Warminster. He was ordained as deacon in 1957, and priest in 1958 in the Church of England by Bishop Robert Mortimer at Exeter Cathedral.

His ministry took him around the world, first as domestic chaplain to the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, then to a parish in the Bahamas before arriving in the United States where he was vicar of St. Bede's Episcopal Church in Menlo Park. For the last twenty-five years of his priesthood, he served as rector of Christ Church Portola Valley. Teaching, ecumenism and social justice were important parts of his ministry. His constant question was, "How do you live the Gospel at this time and in this place?" Following his retirement in 1996, he assisted at various churches on the Peninsula, including Transfiguration (San Mateo), St. Mark's (Palo Alto), and his former parishes of St. Bede's and Christ Church.

He is survived by his wife, Marjorie; children John, Winifred and Theresa Michal; and grandchildren.

A requiem Eucharist will be celebrated at Christ Church on January 22, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. Proof of vaccination and masks, as required by the Diocese of California, will be necessary for attendance. A link for attendance by Zoom can be obtained from the church.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donations in his memory to Saint Bruno Catholic Church, San Bruno; Safe Harbor Shelter, South San Francisco; Second Harvest Food Bank of Silicon Valley; or Amnesty International.



PAID OBITUARY

See SEQUOIA, page 13

Coronavirus central: Santa Clara County officials agree to keep schools open

By Embarcadero Media staff

The Santa Clara County Office of Education and Public Health Department agree that keeping schools open and in class full-time is important during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Officials said that school districts in the county may no longer offer remote or virtual learning in lieu of in-person instruction, stating that students learn best when they are amongst their peers and have access to school resources.

"Keeping our students, staff, and families safe remains our top

priority," Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, county schools superintendent, said. "We are working alongside our school districts to protect in-person learning and practice the appropriate safety protocols."

"The good news is that the cases we are seeing from omicron are milder than previous COVID cases," said Dr. Sara Cody, the county's public health director. "We have also learned that we need to find ways to coexist and live with COVID. We have learned a lot from the previous two years."

Cody and Dewan said it is Santa Clara County's goal to ensure that students receive a

solid, in-person education.

San Mateo County Sheriff's Office updates procedures at correctional facilities due to COVID

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office and San Mateo County Correctional Health Services on Thursday implemented updated procedures at correctional facilities to protect employees and incarcerated people from COVID-19, including the highly contagious omicron variant.

The updated procedures include:

- All in-person visits have been canceled until further notice with the exception of attorney visits and court-ordered visits.

- All staff are required to wear N-95 or KN-95 masks inside all correctional facilities, and incarcerated people are required to wear masks when they are outside their cells and are required to wear an N-95 or KN-95 mask when going to court.

- In-person programs have been canceled until further notice, and there will be no in-person meetings or large gatherings except for emergencies.

- Newly arrived incarcerated people will be quarantined per

CDC guidelines, and all correctional staff will be required to take COVID-19 tests once per week. All arrestees will be screened outside the facility and will be isolated if they display symptoms of COVID-19.

Comprehensive COVID-19 coverage

View interactive charts tracking the spread of the coronavirus in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties online at paloaltoonline.atavist.com/tracking-the-coronavirus. Find a comprehensive collection of coverage on the Midpeninsula's response to the new coronavirus by The Almanac and its sister publications, Palo Alto Online, and the Mountain View Voice, at tinyurl.com/c19-Almanac.

—Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

SEQUOIA

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forced to quarantine in order to safeguard student and community health, she said.

Recent district actions during the pandemic

The district also outlined the measures it's taken to keep schools open, including:

- Maintain partnership with Worksite Labs for testing and contact tracing.

- Offer mass testing for students and employees on Monday, Jan. 17, through Sunday, Jan. 24, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

- Deploy district office staff to schools to assist with classroom coverage.

- If state or federal law does not provide additional COVID-19-related leave this school year,

the district will negotiate with its labor partners regarding COVID-19 leave for purposes of quarantining employees that test positive for COVID-19. The district will rely on emergency response package funding, if available, for such leave.

- Encourage community members and parents to apply for employment with the district to temporarily fill COVID-19-related vacancies

(such as substitute teachers or custodians).

The district temporarily suspended contact tracing because it doesn't have enough staffing to cover the surge in cases, according to the resolution.

Prior to winter break, the district, which has roughly 11,000 students and staff members, had only about 175 cases in total during the entire fall semester.

The board planned to meet in

closed session at 3:30 p.m. with the teachers union, unrepresented employees and classified staff over labor negotiations.

District administrators also planned to update the board on testing, vaccinations, labor force recruitment and continuity of learning measures. ▀

Email Staff Writer Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

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Dr. Anthony Fauci: 'Many more children will be infected'

Omicron will cause hospitalizations to spike, the nation's top doctors say

By Sue Dremann

Children are likely to be among the most frequently infected by the COVID-19 omicron variant, which is sweeping the nation and the Bay Area, health leaders said during a White House press conference on Jan. 5.

With 96% of schools open for in-person learning, and children younger than 5 not yet approved for a vaccination, the numbers of cases are bound to increase. Sick patients could again fill up hospital beds despite the lesser severity of omicron symptoms, said Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

"Many more children will be infected," Fauci said.

The omicron variant

comprises an estimated 95% of cases in the U.S., with the previously ubiquitous delta variant now accounting for 5%, according to Dr. Rochelle Walensky, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The infections are also spreading rapidly, with waves of cases breaking records on a daily basis.

Nationally, there are currently 491,700 new cases per day, an increase of 98% over the prior week, Walensky noted.

The seven-day average of hospital admissions nationwide is about 14,800 per day, an increase of about 63% above the previous week. The seven-day average of daily deaths is about 1,200 per day, an increase of about 5% over the prior week, Walensky said.

Omicron symptoms are thought to be less severe than the delta and other prior variants, according to international studies and preliminary data from Texas. Omicron also differs from previous variants by getting into upper-bronchial and airway secretions, but not the lungs, Fauci said.

While there are indications that omicron causes fewer hospitalizations and less need to put patients on oxygen, there's a caveat, he said. Increased transmission rates will result in an increase in hospitalizations.

With more cases, Fauci said, "A certain proportion are going to be severe."

The number of hospitalizations appears to be growing in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Santa Clara County

saw a 17% increase in hospitalizations from COVID-19 in one day, from Jan. 3 to Jan. 4 and San Mateo County had a nearly 9% increase during the same days, according to the California Department of Public Health COVID-19 Hospital Dashboard.

In the course of a week through Jan. 4, Santa Clara County had a 76.5% increase in hospitalizations and San Mateo County's hospital rate increased 67.8% in the same week, according to the state data.

Vaccination and its protective benefits

Federal officials are changing their strategies to stem deluges of cases almost as quickly as the virus is mutating into variants. On Monday, Jan. 3, the Food and Drug Administration shortened the recommended span of time between the second Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccination and a booster shot to five months instead of six for anyone older than 12.

The FDA on Monday also approved the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer booster dose for children ages 12 to 15. On Wednesday, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention followed the recommendation of its Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices to allow boosters for that age group.

The CDC has recommended that 5- to 11-year-old children with compromised immune systems should receive a booster shot 28 days after their second shot of the Pfizer vaccine, said Jeff Zients, White House COVID-19 response coordinator.

COVID-19 vaccines haven't yet been approved for children younger than 5 years old, but clinical studies of children ages six months to 5 years are underway. Results could be in by the earlier part of the year, Fauci said.

Given the high degree of omicron's transmissibility, Fauci said the best way to protect young children who cannot receive a vaccine is to have them wear a mask if they are able to tolerate one in congregate settings or to surround them with people who are vaccinated.

Anyone who can be vaccinated and receive boosters should do so to reduce the most severe effects. Large studies in Israel comparing people who received boosters with those who were fully vaccinated found a booster dose reduced infection by a factor of 10 in all age groups. Individuals older than 60

who were boosted showed an 18-times decrease in severe disease compared to those who had only received the two-shot regimen. Severe disease in people ages 40 to 59 years old decreased by a factor of 22. People who received a booster shot had a 90% lower death rate due to COVID-19 than those who did not receive a booster shot, she noted.

Although the Israeli research was done with the delta variant, health leaders think the same will hold true for the omicron variant, Walensky said.

How the federal government is responding

The Biden administration has been ramping up measures to prevent infections. It provided \$130 billion in American Rescue Plan funding to schools to implement prevention measures, including ventilation and social distancing, and an additional \$10 billion to support testing in schools, Zients said.

The administration has also added military doctors, nurses, and emergency medical technicians to assist local hospital staff throughout the country and additional teams are ready to be sent as needed, he said.

On Jan. 4, President Joe Biden announced he has instructed the COVID-19 response team to double the government's purchase of the Pfizer antiviral pill from 10 million treatment courses to 20 million. The administration expects it will have the first 10 million treatment courses by the end of June instead of the end of September, Zients said.

"These pills can dramatically decrease hospitalizations and deaths and are a game-changer, with the potential to alter the impact of COVID on people and on our nation," he said.

Meanwhile, many pharmacies are running out of at-home, rapid COVID-19 test kits and there are often long appointment wait times at public facilities. Zients said turn-around times are also deteriorating for lab-test results due to staffing issues. The Biden administration's promised 500 million free at-home, rapid COVID-19 tests won't be available until sometime later in January. But the government won't cannibalize the stock going to pharmacies to fill its own test-kit quota, he said. ■

Email Staff Writer Sue Dremann at sdremann@paweekly.com.



TOWN OF ATHERTON NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Atherton Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider a recommendation to the City Council on adoption of an Ordinance governing the development of qualified Senate Bill 9 subdivisions and development projects on single-family properties within the Town of Atherton.

This meeting will be held via teleconference only pursuant to Government Code section 54953(e) to provide the safest environment for staff and the public while allowing for public participation. The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via Zoom Meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/147031861>

Meeting ID: 147-031-861

Dial In: +1 669 900 6833, 147031861

Remote Public Comments:

Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. The following email will be monitored during the meeting and public comments received will be read into the record.

Email: rrobinson@ci.atherton.ca.us

Description: The Planning Commission is considering a recommendation to the City Council for adoption of an Ordinance governing the development of qualified Senate Bill 9 subdivisions and development projects on single-family properties within the Town of Atherton. The establishment of these regulations will result in the orderly subdivision and development of qualified Senate Bill No. 9 (2021) ("SB 9") projects while ensuring that the new units are consistent with the existing development patterns of the Town and do not create any significant impacts with regards to public infrastructure or public safety. **A copy of the meeting agenda, staff report and draft Ordinance can be found online by Thursday, January 20, 2022 here:** <https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/Archive.aspx?AMID=44&Type=Recent>

The proposal has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to CEQA Section 15378(a), which defines projects subject to these provisions. The proposal does not meet the definition of a project.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said Ordinance is set for hearing by the Planning Commission at its meeting on **January 26, 2022 at 6:00 PM** via teleconference accessible through the above-described information, at which time and place all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the Ordinance should or should not be recommended for approval.

IF YOU CHALLENGE any actions taken to prepare a recommendation to the City Council on adoption of a draft SB 9 Ordinance in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing.

Planning Commission decisions are appealable by any aggrieved person to the City Council within 10 days of the date of the decision.

If you have any questions on the item, please contact Ralph Robinson, Assistant Planner, at rrobinson@ci.atherton.ca.us or 650-752-0544. Any attendee who wishes accommodation for a disability should contact the Building Division at (650) 752-0542 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Date Published: January 14, 2022

Date Posted: January 13, 2022

ATHERTON PLANNING COMMISSION

/s/ Lisa Costa Sanders

Lisa Costa Sanders, Town Planner

Unboosted: California COVID-19 booster rate falls below 40% in most counties

By Kristen Hwang and
Ana B. Ibarra/CalMatters

Hospitals are at capacity. COVID-19 infections are at record highs. Testing lines stretch for hours. Yet even as the omicron variant batters the state, only 38% of vaccinated Californians have gotten a booster shot.

As with initial vaccinations, acceptance of the booster shot has varied throughout California: Counties in the far north and rural areas continue to see lower numbers, with as few as 23% of vaccinated people getting a booster in Mariposa, Colusa and Merced counties, according to a CalMatters analysis of state data.

The Bay Area boasts the highest rate, at 55%, and only three counties have more than half of their vaccinated population boosted: San Francisco, Marin and San Mateo. In 19 California counties, less than a third of eligible residents are boosted.

In Imperial County — the border community that led the state in vaccination rates last spring after it was hit hard by the virus — only a quarter of eligible residents have gotten a booster shot. The health officer there blames “pandemic fatigue.”

“I do think there’s been some fatigue after nearly two years of this pandemic, not just in Imperial County, but everywhere,” said Health Officer Dr. Stephen Munday. “People want to get back to their normal lives. They want to go to work, they want to take care of their families. It’s kind of like, well, gosh, I got my

two doses, why do I have to get another one?”

It’s not just people in rural counties where a majority of people have refused so far to get the extra shot: Los Angeles, Kern and Santa Barbara and 28 other counties have lower booster rates than the 38% statewide average. Major population centers such as San Diego, San Bernardino and Riverside are lagging behind.

State and federal recommendations for booster shots have changed several times, making them difficult for the public to follow. Current guidance advises a booster for all adults, while children as young as 12 can only get an additional Pfizer shot. Immunocompromised children as young as 5 are also eligible for another Pfizer dose.

Studies show an additional dose can double protection against infection and is highly effective in preventing severe disease and hospitalization even against the omicron variant, said UC San Francisco epidemiologist George Rutherford.

“Run, don’t walk, to go get your boosters,” Fresno County Health Officer Dr. Rais Vohra said.

Most older adults throughout the state have listened to the advice: Nearly 64% have been boosted. In Marin County, as many as 80% of those 65 and older have been boosted, and only four counties have boosted fewer than half of their older population.

But for younger Californians, getting an additional dose is far less common. Only 47% of those aged 50-64 have been boosted. Forty-four counties have boosted

less than half their population in this age group.

“The case spikes are being driven by the unvaccinated, which are 25 to 45 years old, largely,” Rutherford said. “That’s where we’re seeing the majority of cases, and that’s where the majority of unvaccinated or under-vaccinated people are.”

Unlike early in the pandemic when vaccines were limited, the slow booster uptake has little to do with availability. “There’s a very robust supply,” said Imperial County Health Officer Munday.

According to the state health department, the state stockpile currently has doses — a 39-day supply. MyTurn, the state’s vaccination portal, recently added booster appointments for children ages 12-15.

“Omicron is here. We can’t abandon the tools that have allowed California to be one of the safest states throughout the pandemic. Those are vaccines and boosters,” Health and Human Services Secretary Dr. Mark Ghaly said during an update Wednesday.

All-patient hospitalizations are approaching 51,000 people, a number just shy of the peak capacity reached during last winter’s surge. Approximately 8,000 of those patients are COVID-19 cases.

“To those who haven’t been vaccinated at all: Get your vaccine as quickly as you can. And those who have been vaccinated but haven’t been boosted, please consider getting boosted,” Ghaly said.

In Fresno, where COVID-19 has prompted deployment of the

National Guard, many health care workers are unable to work due to COVID-19 exposure or infection, further straining their hospital system, officials said.

Only a third of eligible residents in Fresno County are currently boosted, according to state data.

“The boosted vaccination population is fending off the omicron infections really quickly,” Vohra said. “For the unvaccinated folks they basically are the ones who are super vulnerable and those are the ones we’re worried about because they’re the ones that land in the hospitals and ICU.”

North of Fresno, officials in sparsely populated Mariposa County are relying heavily on the state’s MyTurn portal to distribute booster shots. Less than a quarter of eligible residents have been boosted.

County Health Officer Dr. Eric Sergienko said mass vaccination clinics have subsided due to decreased demand, fewer resources and privacy concerns in their small community.

“Rather than doing clinics with hundreds, we have clinics through MyTurn that are booked out with 30 to 100 people at our scheduled clinics on Tuesdays and Thursday,” Sergienko said.

Cases and hospitalizations in Mariposa County have trended younger with a majority of cases occurring among those ages 20-40 and a majority of hospitalizations among unvaccinated people ages 40 to 55, department spokeswoman Lizz Darcy said.

The statewide surge in infections and hospitalizations is

expected to peak during the third week of January, experts say. Hospitalizations remain substantially below pre-vaccine levels.

Community organizations and health centers, which have been at the forefront of vaccine education and distribution, say interest in the booster has increased during this current surge.

“It seems our community is much more receptive to receiving the booster than they were originally to get the first dose,” said Bryant Macias, emergency relief supervisor at the United Farmworkers Foundation, which has advocated for priority doses for farmworkers and organize clinics.

“The main challenges we have identified are individuals not knowing how long they need to wait before getting the booster shot, whether or not they can get a booster that is different from their initial vaccine, and some folks only wanting the booster if it’s the same kind as their initial dose.”

In agricultural counties, like those in the Central Valley, workplace vaccine clinics played an important role in increasing access last spring. Those events for boosters may not be as visible yet because it’s the off season for many crops. But they’re in the plans, said Irene de Barraicua, director of operations with Lideres Campesinas, a nonprofit network of farm workers based in Oxnard.

“We’ve heard from counties and workgroups that are enthusiastic about continuing these efforts,” she said. ■

BETSY NASH

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development at 1300 El Camino Real, which has residential units expected to open in the spring, with offices and retail set to open shortly thereafter, according to Nash, and the Guild Theatre, which is expected to open in February.

After the new city manager is selected, he or she will also be able to work toward hiring a new economic development manager — work that is currently being done by a consultant — and community development director, according to Nash. She also favors exploring the idea of adding more housing units downtown, such as above retail on Santa Cruz Avenue or using parking lots, possibly for affordable housing, and finding other ways to

accommodate parking demand.

When it comes to community outreach, it’s a thing all cities struggle with, she said.

“We need to do a better job reaching residents in Menlo Park who aren’t typically plugged into city activities,” she said. “Communication is one of the most important things local government can do.”

Steps to improve communication might include providing city materials in Spanish and make efforts to “make everyone feel welcome,” she added.

Among the projects ahead of the City Council this year besides hiring a new permanent city manager — the Council intends to name Deputy City Manager Justin Murphy as interim city manager at its Jan. 11 meeting — are beginning the environmental review process for the city’s new housing

plan and developing a plan to improve the city’s safety and environmental justice practices, among many other to-do items, Nash said.

With some of the downtown street closures, there have been more people walking and cycling around, which has put pressure on the city’s bike and pedestrian infrastructure, she said. Figuring out how to keep streets safe and comfortable for people as traffic increases also presents a challenge, she added.

Other projects expected to move forward in the coming months include:

■ **Quiet zones.** A request for proposals for consultants to conduct a feasibility study is expected to be released shortly, according to Nash. The request is expected to ask contractors to figure out what

it would take, how much it would cost, and what could be accomplished by making the rail crossings in Menlo Park “quiet zones” where Caltrain doesn’t blare its horn whenever it passes through.

■ **Middle Plaza bike crossing.** Sometime in January, the city is expected to receive an update. There have been some challenges working with Caltrain and its electrification plans, Nash said. “We’ve not been able to move that ahead as quickly as we would have liked.”

■ **Redistricting.** The City Council redistricting process is happening independent of the City Council. Menlo Park’s Independent Redistricting Commission has a number of upcoming meetings to redraw district boundaries citywide based on the 2020 U.S. Census data and is expected to select

a final map by the April 17 deadline.

■ **New city manager.** The application period for Menlo Park’s next city manager is expected to close as soon as the end of the week, after which the council plans to review applicants and conduct interviews, according to Nash. The city announced Friday, Jan. 7, that City Manager Starla Jerome-Robinson tendered her resignation in advance of her retirement and plans to work no later than Jan. 28.

“We’ve got so many opportunities in front of us. We’ve got a chance to have a really great year,” Nash said. “I think Menlo Park is such a special place. We have to keep building on that.” ■

Email Staff Writer Kate
Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com.

COVID CASES

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have been vaccinated.

Vaccines and boosters are “a very, very, very, very important part” of staving off infections and reducing the severity of illness in breakthrough cases. The data “shows how well vaccines reduce your chance of becoming a case,” she said.

But Cody added the reputed “mildness” of the omicron variant can be deceiving. The word “mild” has a different meaning to doctors than to patients. When doctors talk of a mild infection, they are speaking about not ending up in the hospital or on oxygen, Cody noted.

“That’s different than a layperson thinking they get to watch TV in bed and drink a hot beverage,” she said.

So far, the death rate has been relatively flat, another possible benefit of vaccinations. Currently, Santa Clara County has five to 10 deaths per week. In early January 2021, when vaccines were not widely available, 160 residents died, Cody noted.

Cody and Rogers are cautiously optimistic the death rate in the current surge — the fifth since the pandemic began — will be significantly lower due to the high numbers of vaccinated



Magali Gauthier

Zachary Zammit, 6, receives a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine from Jackie Inclan at Belle Haven School in Menlo Park on Jan. 10. People who are vaccinated but have not gotten booster shots are twice as likely to get breakthrough infections, according to Santa Clara County data.

residents in both counties and the omicron variant’s possibly less severe infection. The next few weeks will show where the numbers are headed.

Rogers noted the hospital system could still be overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of people

who become infected by the more transmissible omicron strain. A certain percentage of those people will have severe illness, she noted.

If there’s good news, it’s that transmission rates of COVID-19 are relatively low in schools. Most children are becoming infected

at family gatherings, Nancy Magee, San Mateo County’s superintendent of schools, told the supervisors. ■

Email Staff Writer Sue Dremann at sdremann@paweekly.com.

MENLO COUNCIL

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San Mateo County communities, as well as the county itself, joined the group but not Menlo Park, Portola Valley or Woodside. Menlo Park had run its own programs to discourage commuting by solo driving since the 1990s and opted out in 2000, but in recent years has explored formally joining the group, according to staff. The group’s executive director officially asked Menlo Park to join the organization in September 2021, according to staff.

By joining, Menlo Park gets a vote on the board of directors, and so the council agreed to name Mayor Betsy Nash as the city’s representative and Councilman Drew Combs as alternate. ■

Email Staff Writer Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com.

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CITY MANAGER

continued from page 1

allegedly related to Jerome-Robinson's performance.

Other council members highlighted Jerome-Robinson's longtime service to the city.

"I can't express enough thanks to Starla Jerome-Robinson," Councilman Ray Mueller said. "She came out of retirement and led the city for over three and a half years, and led us through the pandemic ... I'm incredibly thankful for her service with the city."

"We are going to miss Starla. She has been an important part of our city government for many years. She has helped us work through the difficulties of the COVID pandemic," Mayor Nash said in a statement provided to The Almanac. "Starla is a long-time resident of Menlo Park and I look forward to seeing her around town."

Vice Mayor Wolosin said she appreciated her years of service and wished her well in retirement.

"I appreciate Starla for coming out of retirement to serve Menlo Park. And I thank her for dealing with the unprecedented challenges over the past two years," Councilwoman Taylor said.

Murphy, a longtime city employee, is now the new interim city manager. He began working for Menlo Park as an associate planner in 1996 before rising through the ranks as a development services manager, assistant



Magali Gauthier

Starla Jerome-Robinson, works at her desk at Menlo Park City Hall on April 10, 2019. She tendered her resignation as city manager on Dec. 27.

community development director, public works director, and most recently, deputy city manager, a role he has been serving in for nearly three years, according to LinkedIn. He holds a bachelor's degree from Stanford University in urban studies and a Master of Public Administration degree from the Harvard Kennedy School.

The City Council has selected The Hawkins Group to conduct a nationwide search for a new city manager and the application period recently closed. Over the next few months, the council plans to consider applications

for the permanent city manager position, according to a press statement.

When a new permanent city manager hire would begin work is still unclear. Often, Jerome-Robinson said, there is a lag time of roughly six to eight weeks before they begin, as they need time to wind up their old jobs and take a break before starting the new position.

"While it's possible the new (city manager) could start by April 1, it seems unlikely," she said. ▀

Email Staff Writer Kate Bradshaw at kbradshaw@almanacnews.com.



Courtesy city of Menlo Park

Justin Murphy, deputy city manager, was appointed as interim city manager in Menlo Park on Jan. 11.

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New law adds mental health to school curriculum

By Carolyn Jones/Bay City News

Health classes in California high schools will soon cover more than nutrition and exercise. Thanks to a new law that went into effect Jan. 1, students will learn about depression, schizophrenia, mood disorders and other serious mental health conditions.

Senate Bill 224 requires all school districts that offer health classes to include mental health as part of the curriculum. The California Department of Education has until Jan. 1, 2023 to incorporate mental health into the state standards, and districts have until Jan. 1, 2024 to begin teaching the new material.

“Hopefully this will change lives,” said State Sen. Anthony Portantino, D-La Canada Flintridge, sponsor of the bill. “That ninth-grader who’s inspired by a health class may go on to save a peer’s life. Everyone one of us touches so many people in our lives, we see this as having an exponential benefit.”

Health classes are not mandatory in California high schools, but about 60% of districts offer a health course that includes lessons on nutrition, exercise,

substance abuse, sexual health, injury prevention, healthy relationships and other health-related topics.

The standards also include mental health, but the new legislation takes the subject a step further, to cover more serious conditions such as schizophrenia, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder and bipolar disorder. The curriculum will explore causes and symptoms of mental illness, as well as treatment and how to advocate for friends or family members who need help. Substance abuse and its relationship to mental health will also be part of the curriculum.

No additional funding is available through the bill, but the financial impact is expected to be minimal. The California Department of Education will create the new curriculum, and schools that don’t already offer health classes will not be required to add them.

Portantino, whose brother died of suicide a decade ago, has long advocated for mental health education. The new law, he said, will empower young people to talk about mental illness,

recognize the signs and provide help for those who need it.

“Teenagers are much more likely to listen to someone at school than a lecture from mom or dad,” he said. “Our hope is that this encourages that peer-to-peer advocacy and support, and it will have wide-reaching effects.”

Even before the pandemic, young people were facing myriad mental health challenges due to social media, school shootings, social injustice, racial inequity and increasing uncertainty about the future. In 2019, a third of high school students reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, according to the Centers for Disease Control. After nearly two years of Covid, those feelings have intensified for many students, especially those who’ve felt isolated or struggled with distance learning and economic hardship.

A California youth advocacy group called Generation Up was a strong supporter of SB 224. Alvin Lee, the group’s executive director, said mental health is a priority for young people and education is a good way to help students cope with their own and their friends’

emotional struggles.

“Mental health is one of the biggest conversations happening right now,” said Lee, a freshman at Claremont McKenna College. “The research is pretty clear. The more mental health education early on, the better the outcomes later. ... Our hope is that this prepares the next generation of students to talk about and deal with mental health issues, their own as well as others’.”

Last month, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy issued a stark warning about the mental health of young people, urging schools, health care companies and other institutions to do a better job supporting young people’s emotional health and self-esteem.

Access to high-quality counseling, instruction on stress management and emotional regulation, limits on social media and video games, and access to physical health care are among the surgeon general’s recommendations. Supporting families who are struggling with poverty and inequities is also key, he said.

“Mental health challenges in children, adolescents, and

young adults are real, and they are widespread,” Murthy said. “But most importantly, they are treatable, and often preventable. ... Our obligation to act is not just medical — it’s moral.”

The California Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance instructors strongly supported the bill, saying that even though mental health is part of existing curriculum, it’s not consistent across school districts and sometimes teachers aren’t adequately prepared to teach it.

Hopefully, this bill will help fix that, said William Potter, the group’s president.

“Many (of our) members instruct mental health topics in schools, and we know how important this education is for young people. It can literally save lives,” he said. “However ... many school districts do not have qualified health teachers who are trained to teach this content and it would be great to see that change.”

Jessica Cruz, executive director of the California chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, said SB 224 is a good

See **MENTAL HEALTH**, page 19

Grab a front row seat to local high school sports

PENINSULA PREPS
PLAYBOOK

The Playbook gives you an in-depth look at what’s going on in prep sports.

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Magali Gauthier

Monroe Ball, 9, receives a second dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine from registered nurse Jackie Inclan at a vaccination clinic at Belle Haven School in Menlo Park on Jan. 10.

SCHOOLS

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Superintendent Darnise Williams said in an email to families on Jan. 7. “Our team has been working to address many concerns related to safety, testing, school closures, and staffing. I have responded to many emails and made phone calls in an attempt to allay fears around possible school closures and to reiterate the district’s commitment to maintain safe spaces for staff and students. Our goal is to keep schools open for in-person instruction.”

M-A Principal Karl Losekoot told families in a Sunday email that “there is no doubt that this has been a strange week as we are existing amidst the omicron surge.”

The school is restricting fans of indoor sports to “just immediate family members” for the time being, he said. The school will reevaluate weekly, looking at new cases of infection in the school and broader community, he said.

On Jan. 6, KN95 masks were passed out to staff members and students, Losekoot said and the district will be ordering more. Health officials have advised people to upgrade from cloth face masks to N95 respirators since omicron appears to be

more contagious than previous variants.

The Woodside High community has had to remain flexible. In an update to families on Sunday, Principal Karen Van Putten said that last week she began typing updates at least three times, but guidelines kept changing as she wrote them. “Our Woodside staff, students and parents deserve praise for their flexibility, patience and cautionary perseverance as we navigate the third year of COVID health and safety protocols and the new omicron variant,” she said.

There were 85 cases reported in the K-8 Ravenswood City School District from Jan. 3 to 7, which has about 1,501 students enrolled in its non-charter schools in Menlo Park and East Palo Alto. The district does not report cases in its charter schools, which it doesn’t operate and enroll about 1,250 students. Costaño Elementary School reported the most cases (27), while Los Robles-Ronald McNair Academy reported the fewest (eight). Seventy of the cases were among students, while 15 were among staff.

In previous weeks, the district reported case numbers in the single digits.

From Jan. 3 to 10, there have been cases reported in the

Menlo Park City School District, which has about 2,716 students at its Atherton and Menlo Park campuses. The district does not break down how many of the cases were among staff and how many were among students.

The two-school, 1,099-student Las Lomas Elementary School District has reported 57 cases since the semester began last week.

The Portola Valley School District reported 26 cases between its two schools during the week of Jan. 3. They were fairly evenly split, with 12 of those cases at Ormondale Elementary School and 14 at Corte Madera Middle School.

There were 22 cases reported in the 365-student Woodside Elementary School District last week Superintendent Steve Frank credited the district’s distribution of rapid tests to families before returning to campus from winter break with catching 17 cases.

New quarantine guidance

Staffing has proved a challenge, some districts moved to shorten the quarantine guidance for teachers and other staff who test positive, allowing them to return to the classroom more quickly.

On Jan. 6, the county adopted the state’s new quarantine guidelines, which state that if fully vaccinated — meaning it’s been at least two weeks after having received two doses and a booster (if booster-eligible) — students or staff members who are exposed to someone who tests positive for the virus can attend school as long as they are



Magali Gauthier

Daisy Valencia, a Worksite Labs medical assistant, and her colleagues direct people through self-administered COVID-19 tests at Woodside High School on Jan. 10.



Magali Gauthier

Medical professionals vaccinate children age five to 11 years old at a clinic at Belle Haven School.

asymptomatic, get tested five to seven days after the exposure, and continue to monitor for symptoms.

Staff members who aren’t fully vaccinated and test positive can return to campus after five days, if they don’t have symptoms and test negative on the fifth day. Previously, people who tested positive needed to quarantine for 10 days.

Students who aren’t vaccinated are required to quarantine for at least five days following the date they were last exposed to COVID-19. If they test negative on or after day five, or have no symptoms, they can return to school.

Decisions about school closures will be made by the schools and districts, in consultation with the county health department, but the state has made clear that there are no thresholds. “The process should be guided by local epidemiology, with particular attention paid to concern for in-school transmission. Operational factors may also be considered, including the ability to maintain sufficient teaching staff to provide in-person instruction,” according to state guidance.

“A temporary school closure due to COVID-19 should be a last resort and considered only after all available resources

have been exhausted in an attempt to preserve in-person education,” according to the guidance. ▀

Email Staff Writer Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

MENTAL HEALTH

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start in reducing the stigma of mental illness and encouraging students, teachers and families to talk about the issue.

“We’re happy this isn’t one-and-done,” she said. “We wanted to make sure it’s robust, ingrained in the curriculum and cumulative over time, so students really get a chance to understand and identify mental health disorders and know how to access resources.”

Ideally, she said, it’s the beginning of more comprehensive and substantial mental health education in schools, beginning in kindergarten.

“My hope is that eventually, this curriculum will get into every school in California and the nation,” she said. “It’s not just for the benefit of students, but their families and teachers, too. It’s for the entire community.”

Your COVID-19 vaccine questions — answered

We’ve compiled a list of who can currently get vaccinated in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, plus answers to common questions and links to resources. Access the page at tinyurl.com/COVIDvaccinequestions. Have a question? Send it to editor@pawebly.com and we’ll do our best to answer it.

Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Artist Danielle Eubank captures the world's oceans on canvas. Pamela Walsh Gallery highlights her most recent journey

By Heather Zimmerman

Talk about getting one's sea legs: Over the past 20 years, artist Danielle Eubank has sailed all the world's oceans and captured the experiences in abstract paintings that delve into the beauty, unpredictability and drama of the open water.

"Boundless," a show made up largely of Eubank's recent ocean paintings, is on view at Pamela Walsh Gallery in Palo Alto through Jan. 22.

In an interview, Eubank said she was always drawn to water but that there are several reasons why it has become such an important theme in her work. For one thing, she likes a challenge — and always has.

In her childhood, Eubank was already frequently drawing and creating art. Time spent at the beach inspired her from an early age, as she was growing up in Sonoma County near Bodega Bay.

One day, around the age of 12 she recalled, "just looking at the waves, sitting there for a second, not really doing anything, watching the water and thinking, 'I'll never be able to draw that. It's beautiful and it's intense and it's amazing, but I can't think of anything harder to draw,' is what went through my mind at that point," she said.

In addition to the challenge, both the emotional pull of people's experiences with water and the element's ever-shifting nature help open it up, as a subject, to broad interpretation.

"The great thing about water is that it's organic. And what we see in it is highly abstract... I can create all kinds of shapes that please me and colors that please me and abstract ideas and emotions. And yet I can

still mold it to make it look like water, which appeals to everyone.

"We all have an experience with water. Whether it's swimming or boating, or fishing or drinking water, or farming or being on vacation, we all have some kind of memory having to do with water, so it's highly evocative," she said.

Eubank has now spent two decades meeting her own challenge of portraying water in her art, with voyages to the world's five oceans: Arctic, Atlantic, Indian, Pacific and Southern. A 2019 trip to the Southern Ocean near Antarctica completed her quest to document all the world's oceans. The bulk of the works featured in "Boundless" were inspired by this most recent trip.

Eubank draws on both colors and textures that viewers might find surprising for ocean-themed paintings, a departure from the expected seaside palette of blues and greens and from the smooth, glassy surfaces that often evoke water in art.

Shades of blue and green do appear in her pieces, but in works such as Southern Ocean IX and Southern Ocean VI, pools and splashes of cool reds and pinks — even a fiery orange in Southern Ocean X — ripple across the canvas. White makes frequent appearances, adding highlights and a sense of depth and luminescence in pieces such as Southern Ocean XIV.

In Southern Ocean XI and Southern Ocean VII, one can see the brush strokes and occasional peeks of the canvas beneath, while the surface of Southern Ocean XIII appears almost velvety. The show also includes Waterlow I, a highly

textured work from earlier in Eubank's career, around 2003.

The broad palette and range of textures reflects the unpredictability of the subject, but also something more: an emotional interpretation of the

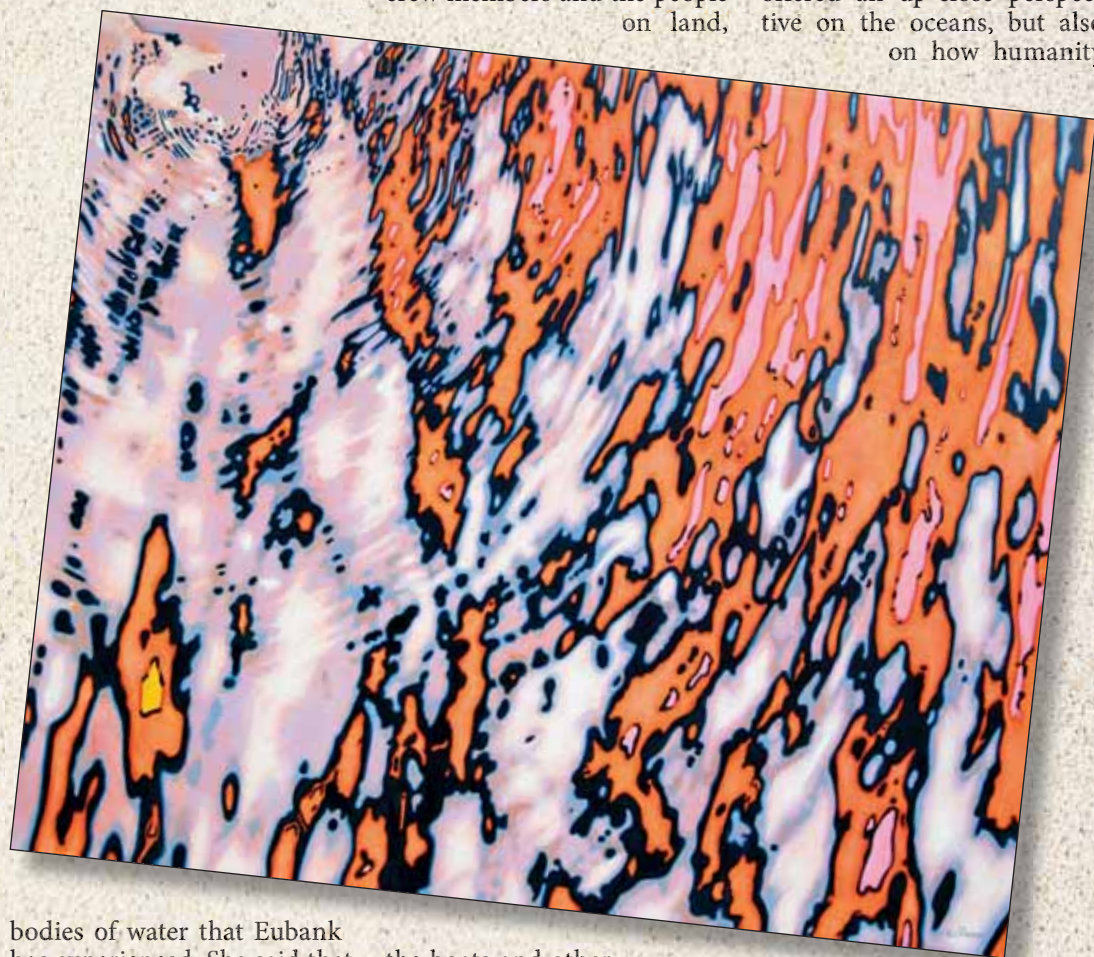
emotional."

Eubank certainly has unique experiences to share. Not only has she journeyed to the world's five oceans, she has also worked as an expedition painter on a number of these voyages, documenting the crew members and the people

on land,

a replica of a 2,500-year-old Phoenician ship that circum-navigated Africa. She also made an expedition to the Arctic on a barquentine (three-masted) tall ship.

Experiencing life aboard these unusual vessels not only offered an up-close perspective on the oceans, but also on how humanity

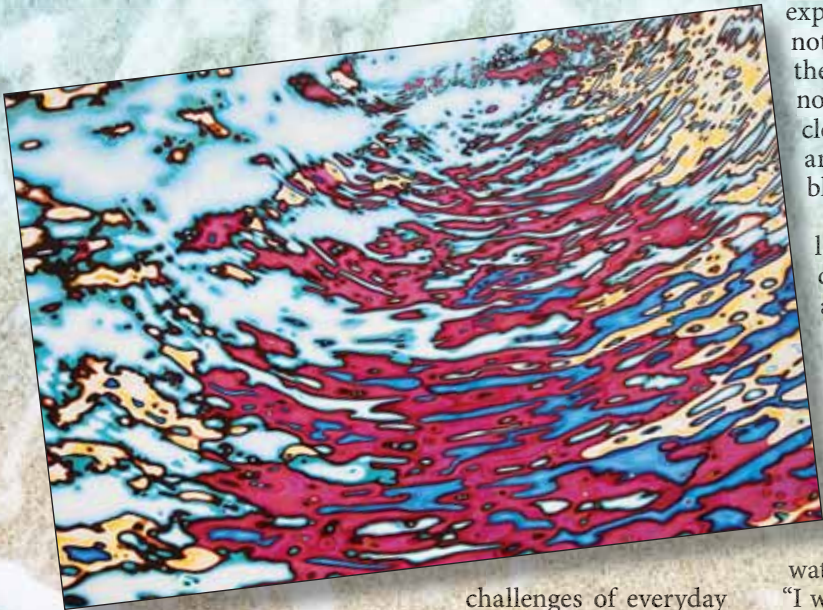


bodies of water that Eubank has experienced. She said that once she really began to process the fact that she had visited and painted all of the planet's oceans, "I subconsciously started to free up my palette quite a lot. So I think what's happening is I've documented these waters, and now I'm going into the experience of the waters. And all the time I'm thinking about my feelings about the place, about water in general. So they're much more

the boats and other surroundings encountered on the trip. She has made four international sailing expeditions and two of these trips were made in ships that replicated historical vessels.

Her first such trip was in a replica Borobudur ship, an ancient Indonesian vessel, on a voyage that rounded the Cape of Good Hope sailing from Indonesia to Ghana. The next trip she made was aboard

Southern Ocean X, above, is among the works featured in "Boundless," an exhibition of paintings by artist Danielle Eubank capturing her 2019 trip to document the Southern Ocean near Antarctica. Paintings such as Southern Ocean IX, right, and Southern Ocean XIV, far right, reflect Eubank's use of unexpected colors. Photos courtesy of Danielle Eubank.

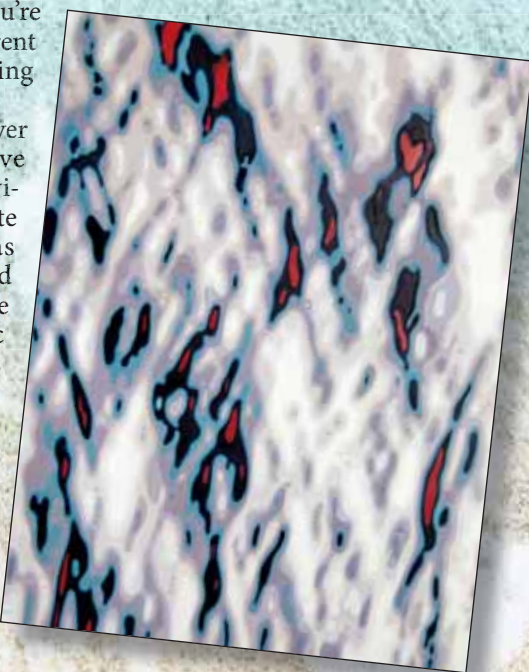


throughout the ages has traveled on water, depended on water and sometimes struggled for survival against the ocean’s harshness. “When you’re on one of these boats, there is no running water. There’s no flushing toilet or anything like that. There’s no oven or other convenience like that. ... I liken it to camping with 10 strangers and you’re not allowed to leave the campsite,” she said, noting that she enjoyed tackling the

challenges of everyday life aboard these ships, such as finding ways to cook and clean with salt water. Eubank’s 2019 trip to the Southern Ocean was made on a modern ship, but in every respect, each voyage is part of the artistic process. On many of these journeys, Eubank was on board as both an artist and a crew member. That first trip on the narrow wooden Borobudur ship taught Eubank, among many other things, what she should — and shouldn’t — pack as an

expedition artist. Canvases not only proved unwieldy in the limited space, but as she noted, canvas is literally the cloth that sails are made of, and they were in danger of blowing away. She quickly streamlined her supplies to document future voyages: three sketchbooks of varying sizes, including a pocket one, for oil paintings and drawings. The work in these sketchbooks would give rise to her paintings. And the voyages shaped her view of water as a subject. “I was painting water before I started going on expeditions. But I feel like I understand it a lot more. I have always had a healthy respect for the ocean, in terms of its power, but I never I never really understood how different it is in the open sea compared to what it’s like when it’s next to an object like an island: the color changes, the depth changes, the wave patterns change, you get different kinds of waves. “And then of course, when you’re in someplace cold like the Arctic or the Southern

Ocean, there you’re getting all different kinds of ice floating in the water.” Her travels over 20 years have also revealed evidence of climate change, such as rock exposed by melting ice in the Arctic Ocean and shifts in the behavior of marine life affected by ocean temperature. Eubank recalled seeing more sea life in the Southern Ocean than she had expected. “As the oceans get warmer, a lot of marine life is heading towards the poles. So in that case, they’re heading south where the water is a little bit cooler,” she said. Now that Eubank has painted the world’s five oceans, she said she would like to visit and paint the five gyres — the vast floating islands of largely plastic trash that continue to grow in the oceans — to raise



awareness and spur people to take action against plastic pollution of our oceans. Pamela Walsh Gallery is located at 540 Ramona St., Palo Alto. For more information, visit pamelawalshgallery.com. **A** *Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at hzimmerman@almanacnews.com.*

Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement
NEW LEAF COUNSELLING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 289731
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
New Leaf Counselling, located at 307 2nd Ave., San Mateo, CA 94401, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
LITTLE MUNCHKINS PROFESSIONAL CLINICAL COUNSELOR INC.
1905 Palm Ave.
San Mateo, CA 94403
CA
This business is conducted by: A Corporation.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 15, 2021.
(ALM Dec. 24, 31, 2021; Jan. 7, 14, 2022)
J & SON'S GENERAL MAINTENANCE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 289770
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
J & Son's General Maintenance, located 919 Runnymede St., E. Palo Alto, CA 94303, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
JESUS O. CRUZ RUIZ
919 Runnymede St.
E. Palo Alto, CA 94303
This business is conducted by: An Individual.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/13/21.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 20, 2021.
(ALM Dec. 31,2021; Jan. 7, 14, 21, 2022)
HAMILTON INTERIOR DESIGNS
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 289683

The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:
Hamilton Interior Designs, located at 332 Arbor Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
JOHN F. HAMILTON JR.
332 Arbor Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
This business is conducted by: An Individual.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 02/13/14.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 9, 2021.
(ALM Dec. 31, 2021; Jan. 7, 14, 21, 2022)
THIS AND THAT HANDYMAN
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 289689
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
This and That Handyman, located at 2801 Marlborough Av., Redwood City CA 94063, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
JOSE ANGEL ABARCA PEREZ
2801 Marlborough Ave.
Redwood City, CA 94063
This business is conducted by: An Individual.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on N/A.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 9, 2021.
(ALM Dec. 31, 2021; Jan. 7, 14, 21, 2022)
ROCKS UNLIMITED
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: 289818
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
Rocks Unlimited, located at 441 Alameda Ave, Half Moon Bay, CA 94019, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
DIANE FENNELL
441 Alameda Ave.
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
ROBERT S. TUCKEY
441 Alameda Ave.
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019
This business is conducted by: A General Partnership.
The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s)

listed above on 1/1/2013.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 23, 2021.
(ALM Jan. 7, 14, 21, 28, 2022)
997 All Other Legals
NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE Trustee Sale No. : 00000008515298 Title Order No.: 1110948 FHA/VA/PMI No.: ATTENTION RECORDER: THE FOLLOWING REFERENCE TO AN ATTACHED SUMMARY APPLIES ONLY TO COPIES PROVIDED TO THE TRUSTOR, NOT TO THIS RECORDED ORIGINAL NOTICE. NOTE: THERE IS A SUMMARY OF THE INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT ATTACHED YOU ARE IN DEFAULT UNDER A DEED OF TRUST, DATED 04/15/2004. UNLESS YOU TAKE ACTION TO PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY, IT MAY BE SOLD AT A PUBLIC SALE. IF YOU NEED AN EXPLANATION OF THE NATURE OF THE PROCEEDING AGAINST YOU, YOU SHOULD CONTACT A LAWYER. BARRETT DAFFIN FRAPPIER TREDER and WEISS, LLP, as duly appointed Trustee under and pursuant to Deed of Trust Recorded on 04/28/2004 as Instrument No. 2004-083184 of official records in the office of the County Recorder of SAN MATEO County, State of CALIFORNIA. EXECUTED BY: WILLIAM COATS AND SHERRI COATS, HUSBAND AND WIFE,WILL SELL AT PUBLIC AUCTION TO HIGHEST BIDDER FOR CASH, CASHIER'S CHECK/CASH EQUIVALENT or other form of payment authorized by California Civil Code 2924h(b), (payable at time of sale in lawful money of the United States). DATE OF SALE: 02/02/2022 TIME OF SALE: 1:00 PM PLACE OF SALE: AT THE MARSHALL STREET ENTRANCE TO THE HALL OF JUSTICE AND RECORDS, 400 COUNTY CENTER, REDWOOD CITY, CA 94061. STREET ADDRESS and other common designation, if any, of the real property described above is purported to be: 10 JOAQUIN ROAD, PORTOLA VALLEY, CALIFORNIA 94028 APN#: 080-130-220 The undersigned Trustee disclaims any liability for any incorrectness of the street address and other common designation, if any, shown herein. Said sale will be made, but without covenant or warranty, expressed or implied, regarding title, possession, or encumbrances, to pay the remaining principal sum of the note(s) secured by said Deed of Trust, with interest thereon, as provided in said note(s), advances, under the terms of said Deed of Trust, fees, charges and expenses of

the Trustee and of the trusts created by said Deed of Trust. The total amount of the unpaid balance of the obligation secured by the property to be sold and reasonable estimated costs, expenses and advances at the time of the initial publication of the Notice of Sale is \$861,356.21. The beneficiary under said Deed of Trust heretofore executed and delivered to the undersigned a written Declaration of Default and Demand for Sale, and a written Notice of Default and Election to Sell. The undersigned caused said Notice of Default and Election to Sell to be recorded in the county where the real property is located. NOTICE TO POTENTIAL BIDDERS: If you are considering bidding on this property lien, you should understand that there are risks involved in bidding at a trustee auction. You will be bidding on a lien, not on the property itself. Placing the highest bid at a trustee auction does not automatically entitle you to free and clear ownership of the property. You should also be aware that the lien being auctioned off may be a junior lien. If you are the highest bidder at the auction, you are or may be responsible for paying off all liens senior to the lien being auctioned off, before you can receive clear title to the property. You are encouraged to investigate the existence, priority, and size of outstanding liens that may exist on this property by contacting the county recorder's office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge you a fee for this information. If you consult either of these resources, you should be aware that the same lender may hold more than one mortgage or deed of trust on the property. NOTICE TO PROPERTY OWNER: The sale date shown on this notice of sale may be postponed one or more times by the mortgagee, beneficiary, trustee, or a court, pursuant to Section 2924g of the California Civil Code. The law requires that information about trustee sale postponements be made available to you and to the public, as a courtesy to those not present at the sale. If you wish to learn whether your sale date has been postponed, and, if applicable, the rescheduled time and date for the sale of this property, you may call 833-561-0243 for information regarding the trustee's sale or visit this Internet Web site WWW.SALES.BDFGROUP.COM for information regarding the sale of this property, using the file number assigned to this case 00000008515298. Information

about postponements that are very short in duration or that occur close in time to the scheduled sale may not immediately be reflected in the telephone information or on the Internet Web site. The best way to verify postponement information is to attend the scheduled sale. NOTICE TO TENANT: You may have a right to purchase this property after the trustee auction pursuant to Section 2924m of the California Civil Code. If you are an "eligible tenant buyer," you can purchase the property if you match the last and highest bid placed at the trustee auction. If you are an "eligible bidder," you may be able to purchase the property if you exceed the last and highest bid placed at the trustee auction. There are three steps to exercising this right of purchase. First, 48 hours after the date of the trustee sale, you can call 833-561-0243, or visit this internet website WWW.SALES.BDFGROUP.COM using the file number assigned to this case 00000008515298 to find the date on which the trustee's sale was held, the amount of the last and highest bid, and the address of the trustee. Second, you must send a written notice of intent to place a bid so that the trustee receives it no more than 15 days after the trustee's sale. Third, you must submit a bid so that the trustee receives it no more than 45 days after the trustee's sale. If you think you may qualify as an "eligible tenant buyer" or "eligible bidder," you should consider contacting an attorney or appropriate real estate professional immediately for advice regarding this potential right to purchase. FOR TRUSTEE SALE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL: 833-561-0243 WWW.SALES.BDFGROUP.COM BARRETT DAFFIN FRAPPIER TREDER and WEISS, LLP IS ACTING AS A DEBT COLLECTOR ATTEMPTING TO COLLECT A DEBT. ANY INFORMATION OBTAINED WILL BE USED FOR THAT PURPOSE. BARRETT DAFFIN FRAPPIER TREDER and WEISS, LLP as Trustee 3990 E. Concourse Street, Suite 350 Ontario, CA 91764 (866) 795-1852 Dated: 12/23/2021 BARRETT DAFFIN FRAPPIER TREDER and WEISS, LLP 4004 Belt Line Road, Suite 100 Addison, Texas 75001-4320 Telephone: (866) 795-1852 Telecopier: (972) 661-7800 A-4739372 01/07/2022, 01/14/2022, 01/21/2022
Call Alicia Santillan at 650-223-6578 or email asantillan@pawekly.com for legal advertising..

Food & Drink

15 Peninsula sandwiches we're craving now

Check out crispy duck in South San Francisco, tortas in Redwood City, veggie sandwiches in Half Moon Bay and more

By Sara Hayden

We enjoy a good sandwich as a perfectly self-contained, hand-held meal or a decadent indulgence accompanied by a stack of napkins. These Peninsula sandwiches satisfy from bread to filling, layer by layer. Have others you love? Email us at peninsulafoodist@embarcaderopublishing.com — we'd love to try!

Apple Fritter: Pigs Gone Wild Brekky

This San Mateo eatery offers breakfast and brunch with donuts, burgers, sandwiches and more. On the menu is a “brekky sandwich” spread that includes the Yoga Mom Brekky (grilled spinach, mushroom, egg, cheddar cheese, pesto) and the Pigs Gone Wild Brekky (grilled mushrooms, bacon, cheddar cheese, scrambled eggs, arugula, chipotle mayo).

The brekky sandwiches come with your choice of bread (sour-dough, egg, brioche, gluten-free, wheat, rye, or English muffin). But if your choice of bread happens to be a glazed donut, get a donut burger. Yup, there's a special section on the menu dedicated to donut burgers! Try the Donut Luther with a beef patty, bacon, American cheese and a fried egg.

applefrittereatery.com; 1901 South Norfolk St., San Mateo; 650-525-9125.

B Deux Go: Croque Poivrons

B Deux Go's croque-style sandwiches with ham or peppers, Gruyere cheese and bechamel sauce are perfectly packaged to eat on the run.

To make it easier to eat while out and about, the sandwiches' buttermilk bread is baked with no oil on the outside, and served in a paper envelope with a napkin neatly tucked within.

Pick up your sandwich to go in Palo Alto from the restaurateurs behind the fine-dining restaurant Baumé — in fact, the team serves orders from Baumé's kitchen door. The Chemel family

launched their to-go sandwich concept in the fall of 2021.

bdeuxgo.com; 201 California Ave., Palo Alto (pick up from kitchen door on Park Boulevard); 408-900-8000.

Cafe Bunn Mi: Crispy Duck

This South San Francisco cafe offers baguettes served with crisp pickled carrots, onions and daikon, and a choice of combination pork, five-spice chicken, grilled pork, lemongrass steak, crispy duck, vegetables, tofu and more. Also very satisfying to go with that crispy duck sandwich? A side of garlic fries.

yelp.com/biz/cafe-bunn-mi-south-san-francisco; 226 Grand Ave., South San Francisco; 650-745-8883.

Greedy Ant: Artichoke Art

This Belmont eatery has a tightly curated sandwich selection with a focus on fresh ingredients.

Among the menu's seven sandwiches are the Artichoke Art (artichoke hearts with fennel pollen, melted brie, roasted red peppers, greens, tomato and garlic pesto), Ham I Am (with choice of shaved truffle ham or rosemary ham, plus havarti, marinated onion, greens, tomato and their magic mayo) and Disco Chicken (roasted chicken breast with herbs, sauteed red onion, jack cheese, tomato, greens and

lime-basil mayo).

Each sandwich comes with a choice of side. Choose between marinated chickpeas in dill or pickled beets.

thegreedyantgourmet.com; 932 Ralston Ave., Belmont; 650-832-1136.

La Casita Chilanga: La Super Aguila

La Casita Chilanga has been in the community for more than 20 years. At an eye-catching location painted half green and half white on Middlefield Road in Redwood City, you'll find tortas with fresh-baked talera, housemade aioli, xipocli salsa, avocado, cheese and caramelized onion along with your choice of other toppings.

Circumstances were difficult when Juan Zamora and his partner first decided to open their own restaurant. They set out to achieve their goal shortly after 9/11.

“In that time, it was a hard time — like right now (during the pandemic),” Zamora says.

But they weren't deterred. “We say, ‘You know what? We should put tortas here, like Mexico City-style.’”

He and his partner found a small place that could fit three tables, developed their own recipes and set up shop with tortas to go. The menu was inspired by their Mexico City hometown, different from the menus at the Asian and Italian restaurants



Magali Gauthier

Respectable Bird co-owner Christian Perez adds sauce to a spicy chicken sandwich in the South San Francisco kitchen.

that Zamora had previously worked at.

“There's little jokes in the menu,” Zamora says.

Some tortas are inspired by football clubs, like La Super Aguila (breaded chicken breast, smoked turkey leg sausage, chorizo, ham, yellow and Monterey cheese) and La Mega Chiva (pasta, caramelized pineapple, chorizo, turkey sausage, Monterey cheese), and celebrities like Sofia Vergara (breaded chicken breast) and Raul de Molina (pork head cheese). La Cubana is the most popular, with thin-cut breaded beef, ham, chorizo and smoked turkey leg sausage.

The team is a mainstay in the Peninsula sandwich scene. In addition to Middlefield Road, La Casita Chilanga has locations on El Camino Real as well as in San Mateo and San Jose (watch for different items on these menus).

Other credits include the Sandwich Bug in Palo Alto, offering deli sandwiches with house-baked bread and special mayo “buggy” sauce, Snacks in San Mateo serving tortas and street foods, and The Patty Shack, offering burgers in Redwood City.

lacasitachilanga.com; 2928 Middlefield Road, Redwood City; 650-568-0351.

Jood: Taook Sandweesh

The Harbali family has a decadeslong history of building food businesses with prized beef, sheep, poultry, and lamb. Their most recent addition to their restaurant repertoire is Jood in San Carlos, showcasing barbecue.

Try a sandwich made with slaw and pickles on lavash, with fries on the side. The Minced and Kneaded Sandweesh is made with meat or vegan kafta, hummus and tahini, and the bestselling Taook Sandweesh is made with marinated grilled chicken breast, creamy garlic sauce and ketchup. Heaven's Sandweesh offers a vegan option with eggplant, cauliflower, pesto and tangy housemade sun sauce.

The online menu has a handy

chart with allergen information. eatjood.com; 635 Laurel St., San Carlos.

Dad's Luncheonette: Mushroom sandwich

Served out of a bright red caboose off Highway 1 in Half Moon Bay, the hamburger sandwich previously made the Peninsula Foodist's chef's bucket list. Served on grilled bread from Rosalind Bakery, the sandwich is made with beef, soft egg, cheese, red onion pickles, “Dad's Sauce” and red oak lettuce.

Also not to be missed is the mushroom sandwich, made with the same ingredients as the burger except for the beef. In place of the patty are maitake mushrooms.

The eatery was opened by co-owners Alexis Liu and Scott Clarke in 2017. After the birth of their daughter, Clarke left his role as a chef de cuisine at the three Michelin-starred Saison as the family sought balance.

dadsluncheonette.com; 225 Highway 1, Half Moon Bay; 650-560-9832.

Little Lucca: Egg salad on Dutch crunch, with everything

Little Lucca has been on the Peninsula since 1980, expanding from South San Francisco to Burlingame. Choose between a roll (sour, sweet, wheat, Dutch crunch or ciabatta) or sliced bread (rye or white).

If you get a roll, the Little Lucca team scrapes out the middle, creating a pocket of crust for maximum filling.

You choose — there are crab and shrimp sandwiches, meatballs, liverwurst, cured meats (including salami, soppressata, coppa and prosciutto), combos like the Chicken Cordon Bleu (breaded chicken, ham, Swiss cheese) and Veggie Delight (cream cheese, tomato, cucumber, avocado and creamy Caesar dressing), and more.

Order your sandwich with “everything” (mayonnaise,



Sara Hayden

La Casita Chilanga sells tortas with names inspired by football clubs like La Super Aguila and celebrities like Sofia Vergara.

mustard, pickles, red onion, lettuce, tomato), and especially one (or both!) of the housemade hot pepper and original garlic sauces for extra spice and savoriness.

littlelucca.com; 724 El Camino Real, South San Francisco; 650-589-8916; 1809 El Camino Real, Burlingame; 650-697-8389.

Just My Toast: Char Siu Toast

Order ahead so your favorite doesn't sell out, then pick up street toast at this newly opened eatery in San Bruno.

Choose from Pimi & Cheese (roasted red bell pepper, cream cheese, cabbage slaw), the J.M.T. Signature (prosciutto cotto, egg, cheese, cabbage slaw), Char Siu Toast (char siu, egg, cabbage slaw) and the Chicken Melt (diced chicken, celery, mayo, onion, cheese, cabbage slaw). As a side, get crispy mini smashed potatoes with onions and garlic.

instagram.com/jmttoast; 1212 El Camino Real Suite F, San Bruno.

Breakwater Barbecue: Brisket sandwich

On the menu at Coastside destination Breakwater Barbecue is the Gold Rush Pulled Pork Sandwich (topped with apple cilantro slaw and Gold Rush sauce), a Reuben (house-smoked pastrami, Swiss cheese, sauerkraut, pickles) and a banh mi that features a daily smoked meat selection.

Founder Wyatt Fields has a particular passion for brisket. The brisket sandwich features slices of smoked and seared Black Angus brisket, caramelized onions, pickles, ancho coffee barbecue sauce and mayo, all on thick cut country sourdough from Rosalind Bakery in Pacifica.

breakwaterbbq.com; 30 Avenue Portola, El Granada; 650-713-5303.

Mendocino Farms: Mrs. Goldfarb's Unreal Reuben

Founded in Los Angeles, Mendocino Farms has locations in Palo Alto, San Mateo and Mountain View. The menu clearly marks vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free items, as well as which items contain nuts.

For those who crave a meaty sandwich without the actual meat, try a Reuben on rye made with plant-based corn beef, apple and celery root slaw, bread and butter pickles and Thousand Island dressing. Get it with havarti cheese for a vegetarian option, or plant-based smoked provolone cheese for a vegan option.

The menu also has options for gluten-free sandwiches, including chimichurri steak and bacon

or chicken pesto caprese (these both have meat), a plant-based burger and more.

mendocinofarms.com; 401 San Antonio Road, Suite 64, Mountain View; 650-209-3987; 167 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto; 650-543-8135; 1060 Park Place, San Mateo; 650-332-8300.

New England Lobster Company: Lobster Roll (Dressed)

Head to Burlingame for a luscious lobster roll with a side of crunchy chips and coleslaw. If you want pure meat, order the Naked option, served with a side of butter, or get mayo, salt and pepper with the Dressed option. The menu also offers a seasonal choice.

The company started out as a wholesale distributor in Maine in 1987 before opening up a market for the public in South San Francisco in 2002. Its brick and mortar eatery has been in Burlingame for about a decade.

newenglandlobster.net; 824 Cowan Road, Burlingame; 650-443-1559.

Respectable Bird: The Sandwich (Spicy)

At a South San Francisco ghost kitchen or food truck, the Respectable Bird team makes their regular or spicy fried chicken sandwiches available via pickup or delivery.

Each is served on a Martin's potato roll. Also used by Shake Shack, the bread holds up to a hefty half-pound of thigh meat, as well as sauce and juicy pickles.

If you're feeling especially bold when it comes to spice, try a level 4 hot chicken sandwich from the group's Love Burn brand. If you do, you'll be required to sign a waiver. Served with a complimentary side of milk.

respectablebird.com; 312 Swift Ave., South San Francisco; 650-754-6258.

Plaza Gourmet Delicatessen: The Godfather

The Peninsula has no shortage of excellent cheesesteak establishments. At Plaza Gourmet in Foster City, you'll find an assortment, including the Famous Philly (grilled sliced beef, onions, peppers, provolone), the Slim Philly (turkey breast, light Jarlsberg), the Pizza Philly (grilled sliced beef, marinara sauce, pepperoni, onions, peppers, melted provolone and mayonnaise) and the Vegetarian Philly (grilled bell peppers, mushrooms, onions, artichoke hearts, melted provolone and mayonnaise).

You'll also find other sandwiches like the Godfather (prosciutto, salami, mortadella,

coppa, provolone, olive oil, vinegar, artichoke hearts, pepperoncinis, lettuce, onions, oregano) and Shrimp Supreme (shrimp salad, avocado, mayonnaise, mustard, lettuce, tomato pickles, onion), as well as imported meats.

fostercitydeli.com; 929 Edgewater Blvd., Foster City; 650-666-8813.

San Benito House Garden Deli: Cheese and avocado on olive-walnut bread

This 116-year-old Half Moon Bay outpost moved out of a temporary location at Pizza Pie and reopened in the fall, following a devastating fire in April 2021.

The San Benito House Garden Deli's homemade breads are velvety smooth, complementing hearty slices of turkey, ham, hot pastrami, cheese or avocado, topped with extra fresh and crisp tomato, onions, lettuce and pickles, and just the right amount of



Sara Hayden

With Breakwater Barbecue, founder Wyatt Fields fulfilled his dream of opening a barbecue restaurant near his Half Moon Bay hometown.

mayo and mustard.

Try olive-walnut bread for a briny crunch (especially tasty with a scoop of egg salad), or whole wheat for subtle sweetness.

If it's really bread you crave and not all the sandwich fixings, take home French bread or a

Portuguese loaf.

sanbenitohouse.com; 356 Main St., Half Moon Bay; 650-726-9507. 📍

Email Associate Digital Editor Sara Hayden at peninsulafoodist@almanacnews.com.



TOWN OF ATHERTON NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Atherton Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to consider a recommendation to the City Council of an Ordinance to repeal and replace Chapter 8.14 "Historical Artifacts" of the Atherton Municipal Code (AMC) with Chapter 8.14 "Historical Preservation".

This meeting will be held via teleconference only pursuant to Government Code section 54953(e) to provide the safest environment for staff and the public while allowing for public participation. The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via: Zoom Meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://zoom.us/j/147031861>

Meeting ID: 147-031-861

Dial In: +1 669 900 6833, 147031861#

Remote Public Comments:

Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. The following email will be monitored during the meeting and public comments received will be read into the record.

Email: rrobinson@ci.atherton.ca.us

Description: The Planning Commission is considering a recommendation to the City Council for adoption of an Ordinance to repeal and replace AMC Chapter 8.14 "Historical Artifacts" to be retitled "Historical Preservation". This purpose of such draft Ordinance is to create a comprehensive Town "historical preservation" approach that is tailored specifically for Historical Artifacts, as well as Historical Buildings, relative to its findings and purpose, definitions, procedures and processes, and other regulatory provisions. The draft Ordinance amendments propose to combine existing AMC regulations pertaining to historical artifacts with proposed new regulations relative to historical buildings. **A copy of the meeting agenda, Planning Commission staff report and draft Ordinance can be found online by Thursday, January 20, 2022 here: <https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/Archive.aspx?AMID=44&Type=Recent>**

The proposal has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to CEQA Section 15308, Actions by Regulatory Agencies for protection of the Environment.

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said application is set for hearing by the Planning Commission at its meeting on **January 26, 2022 at 6:00 PM** via teleconference accessible through the above-described information, at which time and place all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the Ordinance should or should not be recommended for approval.

IF YOU CHALLENGE any actions taken to prepare a recommendation to the City Council on adoption of the Ordinance in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing.

Planning Commission decisions are appealable by any aggrieved person to the City Council within 10 days of the date of the decision.

If you have any questions on the item, please contact Stephanie B. Davis, Principal Planner, at sbertollo-davis@ci.atherton.ca.us or 650-773-7249. Any attendee who wishes accommodation for a disability should contact the Building Division at (650) 752-0542 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Date Published: January 14, 2022

Date Posted: January 13, 2022

ATHERTON PLANNING COMMISSION

/s/ Lisa Costa Sanders

Lisa Costa Sanders, Town Planner

94025

MENLO PARK



1165 HILLVIEW DRIVE | Outstanding opportunity on a Premier Menlo Park Street

- / Single-level, updated 4 bed, 2 baths - ready to move in or further renovate
 - / Lot size: 10,010 sq. ft.
 - / Living room with fireplace, fresh paint, hardwood floors and great connection to large outdoor patio
 - / Formal dining room
 - / Located just over 1/2 mile from downtown Menlo Park's shopping and dining district
 - / Excellent Menlo Park schools
- OFFERED AT \$4,100,000

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RANKED #1 COMPASS SMALL TEAM
IN CALIFORNIA AND #5 SMALL TEAM
IN THE NATION, PER *The Real
Trends Report*, JUNE 2021.

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