

The Almanac

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

DECEMBER 9, 2022 | VOL. 58 NO. 14



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Portola Valley parents voice support for teachers amid strained contract negotiations

Critics say the school district's actions amount to 'union busting'

By Angela Swartz

Armed with large posters stating facts and quotes related to a contentious bargaining process, teachers and parents came before the Portola Valley Elementary School District governing board on Nov. 17 to advocate for better treatment and pay for teachers.

The Portola Valley Teachers Association and district officials, which last met on Oct. 26 and will next meet on Monday, Dec. 12, have both expressed dissatisfaction with the negotiations, with a contract for the current 2022-23 school year yet to be inked. The district has accused the teachers of misrepresenting their pay in comparison to neighboring school districts.

Portola Valley district officials threatened to declare an impasse — which would be the first of three steps potentially leading to a strike — on multiple

occasions, said PVTA President Tim Sato in a statement.

Superintendent Roberta Zarea denied that the district has threatened to declare an impasse.

"In fact, we have a couple of scheduled meeting dates with PVTA's bargaining team," she said in an email.

The district has sent out two fact sheets with information on the negotiation process, along with teacher salaries and benefits. Jacob Averbuck, an Ormondale School parent, told the school board on Nov. 17 that he was "shocked" and "embarrassed" that the district sent out its "union busting" material through the ParentSquare platform on Nov. 29.

"We are extremely disappointed that PVSD is choosing to utilize district resources to spread stilted information to the public," said Sato, noting

See **TEACHERS**, page 15



Courtesy Tim Sato

Teachers and parents gather in support of Portola Valley Elementary School District teachers during a Nov. 17 school board meeting.

County pays Woodside equestrian \$750K settlement in wrongful DUI arrest lawsuit

Sheriff's Department ignored Odette Riegman's signs of serious illness and left her in a jail cell with no medical attention, suit alleges

By Sue Dremann

A Woodside woman who was arrested while suffering a medical emergency that deputies mistook for intoxication has settled her lawsuit against San Mateo County for \$750,000, according to an agreement dated Aug. 1.

Odette Monica Riegman, who was 52 at the time, had never been arrested or convicted of any offense prior to being taken into custody by San Mateo County Sheriff's deputies on

Dec. 16, 2019. Yet what followed was a series of alleged serious missteps, false assumptions and breaches of department policy that nearly cost her her life, according to the legal complaint filed in the federal U.S. District Court, Northern District of California on Dec. 23, 2020.

Riegman, who is a professional equestrian and trains horses and riders, had been feeling ill for several days. At 10 a.m. on the day of her arrest, she had been driving her car in Woodside when she nearly lost

consciousness, lost control of her car, and drove into a steel post, according to the lawsuit.

Four deputies arrived at the scene and found that Riegman had impaired balance and failed to pass a field sobriety test — meaning she couldn't respond in a coordinated fashion to commands such as walking in a straight line. She tested "zero" during three separate Breathalyzer tests administered by deputies, however, indicating she had no alcohol in her system. A deputy found pills

and a powder while searching Riegman's car, but a test by another deputy on scene determined the substances were legal antihistamines.

Riegman repeatedly told one of the deputies that she'd had the flu since the previous Friday. She had been taking aspirin and Advil for her symptoms, which included fever. She "just lay in bed for three and a half days" and had "lost muscle tone," she told the deputy, according to the lawsuit. A check of her heart rate found it was high — 120 — while

a normal resting heart rate is 60 to 100 beats per minute.

But the deputy didn't believe Riegman, despite her repeatedly saying that she was sick.

"I don't smell alcohol at this time — I do believe that you have something onboard that is affecting your driving. Okay or something else medical, I don't know," the deputy allegedly said.

Without further medical evaluation, Riegman was arrested

See **LAWSUIT**, page 17

INSIDE

Help local families in need 12

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Peter Olson
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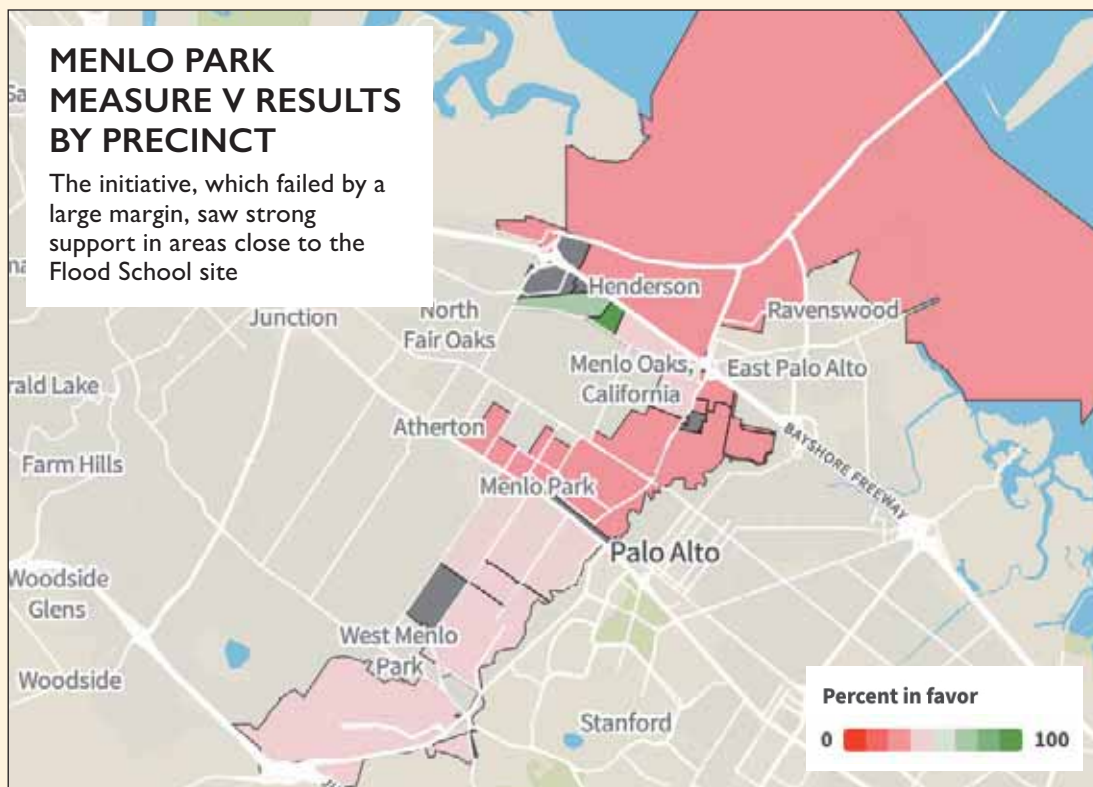


Local News

MENLO PARK | AThERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

MENLO PARK MEASURE V RESULTS BY PRECINCT

The initiative, which failed by a large margin, saw strong support in areas close to the Flood School site



Source: San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division. Chart by Zoe Morgan.

Semi-official Dec. 5 election results, color-coded by Menlo Park precinct, show areas in red where opposition to Measure V was strongest.

The precincts where Menlo Park's Measure V won

Election data shows support higher among Flood School neighbors

By Cameron Rebosio

Menlo Park's controversial Measure V was soundly defeated in the Nov. 8 election, with only one area strongly in support: Flood School's neighbors.

Measure V was a citizen-sponsored initiative on the November ballot that aimed

to restrict the Menlo Park City Council's ability to rezone single-family lots to higher density.

If it had passed, the city would have had to put any rezoning of "R1" lots to a citywide vote in a regularly scheduled election. Measure V would have had a chilling effect on housing development

throughout most of the city, according to city staff reports, state housing officials and local housing advocates.

The ballot measure was defeated by a large margin, with 61.8% voting against it citywide. According to semi-official results released by San

See **MEASURE V**, page 13

Menlo Park City Council approves huge Willow Village project

Meta's ambitious 59-acre campus will begin building infrastructure in 2023

By Cameron Rebosio

Meta's ambitious Willow Village development in Belle Haven was approved Dec. 6 after two years of collaboration and deliberation with the Menlo Park City Council.

The project will redevelop 59 acres with up to 1.2 million square feet of office space and up to 1,730 units. Meta, formerly

known as Facebook, has plans to build the ambitious mixed-use development with office, housing and a 193-room hotel, plus retail and commercial space, a dog park and a publicly accessible park in the Belle Haven neighborhood. The main development would be built along Willow Road between Hamilton Avenue and Ivy Drive, according to the application.

Of the proposed 1,730 units,

312 are being offered at a below-market rate ranging from moderate-income to extremely low-income. Willow Village will also have a 19-unit affordable senior housing building.

"At the end of the day, this project is really kind of a cost-benefit analysis," said Council member Jen Wolosin. "Are we getting enough benefits? Are we

See **WILLOW VILLAGE**, page 17

Portola Valley Planning Commissioner recuses herself from housing element talks

Council member-elect Judith Hasko lives within 1,000 feet of two proposed sites for upzoning

By Angela Swartz

After public comment at the start of a Nov. 30 Portola Valley Planning Commission meeting, Commissioner Judith Hasko, who was just elected to a seat on the Town Council, said she needed to make an announcement.

The news? She wouldn't be taking part in the night's discussion about the housing element, a state-mandated planning document outlining future residential growth, because of a potential conflict of interest at two sites the town is planning to upzone.

The town is racing to modify its draft element so it can maintain local control over development and evade the so-called "builder's remedy."

"It was brought to my attention that I may have a conflict that would preclude me from taking part in the discussion on the housing element items to be discussed this evening," Hasko said, who is set to join the council on Dec. 14. "Out of caution, given that I am now aware of the need to analyze this, I'm going to recuse myself from the

discussion items on the agenda tonight and plan to work with the town attorney to determine whether I can participate in future discussions related to the housing element items."

Hasko explained that she lives on Applewood Lane within 1,000 feet of two Nathhorst Triangle properties, 4370 and the 4394 Alpine Road, that the town plans to upzone as part of its plans for future housing. The two sites could produce up to 23 new housing units. But those weren't the only items related to the housing up for discussion that evening: updating its general plan to match with housing element needs, housing element programs and the state's density bonus law.

Several residents said that they didn't understand why Hasko couldn't be part of the discussion. Chair Anne Kopf-Sill clarified that this was Hasko's individual decision. When The Almanac reached out to her, Hasko was not available for further clarification on why she would recuse herself from the housing element as a whole.

"The town attorney is consulted but it's important officials be given latitude to make decisions on their own because there are severe consequences if these conflict of interest rules

See **HASKO**, page 14



Judith Hasko



Magali Gauthier

Portola Valley plans to upzone the property at 4370 Alpine Road.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Chan Zuckerberg Initiative announces 2023 Community Fund grantees

Dozens of nonprofits across San Mateo County got an early Christmas gift from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, which announced the 2023 CZI Community Fund recipients. A total of \$6 million has been split between 63 organizations to support their work in housing, education and health care, among other areas, according to a Nov. 17 press release.

Each recipient is getting two-year grants that total up to \$200,000. "Local community driven-solutions are the key to building a healthier, more equitable partner in San Mateo County," Andrea Jones, CZI's director of Bay Area giving, said in the release.

Hope Horizon East Palo Alto (previously Bayshore Christian Ministries), which teaches life skills to youth, is also among the recipients. "This vote of confidence in the work we have been doing in East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park since 1984 is a great encouragement to our community of students, families, churches, volunteers, donors and prayer warriors," Executive Director Tiffany Hong said in a statement.

Menlo Park organizations receiving grants are: All Five; Belle Haven Community Development Fund; Menlo Spark; Menlo Together; North Fair Oaks Community Alliance; and St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room.

Since debuting in 2017, the fund has provided \$26 million across more than 170 local organizations.

—Embarcadero Media staff

Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory classes

Winter theater class registration is open for Portola Valley Theatre Conservatory classes. Classes are for children ages 3 through eighth graders and resume Jan. 9. New students can add or drop through Jan. 20 and take part into the spring showcase, "Pure Imagination," from May 19-21. Check out our current class offerings and register at pvtc-ca.org/classes. Contact info@pvtc-ca.org or call 650-530-2428 for more information.

—Angela Swartz

Caltrain reduces train service for two weeks

Caltrain service has been reduced by more than one-third and will end earlier each night during a two-week period that began Monday, Dec. 5.

Crews are working to expedite a project between Belmont and Mountain View stations, part of a larger endeavor converting the diesel system to electric expected to be completed in 2024.

The number of trains per day have been reduced to 68 — down from 104 — on weekdays for the duration of the service reduction. Normal service will resume Monday, Dec. 19.

The temporary schedule is available at caltrain.com/december-2022-service-change.

Weekend train service between Belmont and Mountain View has been replaced by bus service. Riders can transfer to SamTrans bus service through the affected area, which will increase travel time for riders by 60-90 minutes.

The weekend bus bridges will serve all regular weekend stops between Belmont and Mountain View stations, with timed train connections via Caltrain on both ends.

During this period of construction, train service will also end early on weeknights and weekends to accelerate work being performed on the entire railroad. The last northbound train each evening will depart Tamien Station at 9:01 p.m. and the last southbound train will depart San Francisco Station at 9:22 p.m.

This construction work includes signal cutover work at 16 grade crossings, requiring a 24/7 single-tracking window between Belmont and Mountain View.

Bay City News Service

CORRECTION

In the Dec. 2 issue of The Almanac, the headline for the Bay Choral Guild's "Hail, Cecilia!" concert story misidentified the choir as the Baroque Choral Guild, a previous name for the group that is no longer used.



Lloyd Lee

Ayesha and Steph Curry, of the Golden State Warriors, center, march in the Palo Alto demonstration for racial justice on June 6, 2020. Records show they sold their Atherton home in September 2021.

Atherton: Warriors' Steph Curry moves across town to \$30 million home

By Angela Swartz

On the heels of news that Warriors star Stephen Curry sold his Atherton home in for \$31.15 million, the website Dirt is reporting that he and wife Ayesha Curry bought a \$30 million home near the Lloyd Park neighborhood in 2020.

The Currys bought the new seven-bedroom, nine-bath home, which spans more than 17,700-square-foot and is closer to the Lloyd Park neighborhood, in December 2020, according to Redfin. This was nine months before they sold the 7,500-square-foot West Atherton one.

The LLC that purchased the new home on a 1.7-acre lot is tied to the same wealth management firm that helped Curry buy his

first Atherton home, records show.

The home was previously owned by Zehavi Sharone, a Silicon Valley executive who most recently served as chairman of the board at Flockta, an AI software company.

Peninsula Custom Homes applied to work on a \$500,000 remodeling project in 2021, records show.

Curry quietly sold his first Atherton home, which was a smaller 7,500-square-foot, 4-bedroom, 5.5 bath home on a 1.2-acre lot, for \$31.15 million in September 2021 to a video game company billionaire. ■

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

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To request delivery, or stop delivery, of The Almanac in zip code 94025, 94027, 94028 and the Woodside portion of 94062, call 854-2626.



For the second time, a student is found with gun on the Menlo-Atherton campus

By Angela Swartz

Less than three weeks after a Menlo-Atherton High School student found with a loaded gun on campus, police arrested another student on Nov. 29, for allegedly bringing a firearm to school. As a result, the school's principal has requested an increased police presence on campus.

Principal Karl Losekoot emailed M-A families on Wednesday morning, Nov. 30, to say that he is "disappointed to know that, once again, one of our students has decided to expose our school community to such a risk." The Atherton police blotter shows that a juvenile was arrested on a weapons charge on Nov. 29.

Earlier in the month, a student was arrested on Nov. 10 for allegedly bringing a loaded gun to the Atherton school, located at



Michelle Le

For the second time in a month, a gun was found on the Menlo-Atherton High School campus.

555 Middlefield Road, police said.

Atherton Police Department Cmdr. Dan Larsen told the student newspaper, the M-A Chronicle that police found the loaded Smith & Wesson M&P Shield .380 pistol. Police told The Almanac that

school staff called police after they found an unattended backpack with a possible firearm in it. Officers were able to determine what student brought the firearm to campus.

"Preliminary facts point to the student never intending

to use the weapon against our students and staff," he said of the most recent incident. "Similar to the prior incident, I want you to know that we will pursue the most aggressive disciplinary sanctions legally allowed. ... I want to be clear in stating that guns on campus are not a normal occurrence at our school. However, one handgun on campus is one too many."

A school staffer was able to "identify the potential threat, recovered the handgun without posing a risk to himself or anyone else, and we were able to immediately contact the Atherton Police Department," Losekoot said.

In addition to asking for increased police presence at

the school, Losekoot said he will work with the Atherton Police Department to develop strategies and additional support to prevent weapons from ever being brought on campus again.

The principal said students may be experiencing some anxiety about these incidents and can check into the school's Zen Den for a break or request to speak to a social-emotional counselor. Students can also check in with their school counselor who can both provide support as well refer them to additional resources. ■

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

San Mateo Community College District announces short list for new chancellor

By Angela Swartz

The San Mateo County Community College District announced three finalists competing to be the district's next chancellor. The position has been temporarily filled by Mike Claire since 2019, when he stepped in for disgraced chancellor emeritus Ron Galatolo. Galatolo exited the district before being charged with 21 felonies in April for misuse of funds during his leadership of the district.

The list of candidates includes Santanu Bandyopadhyay, president at Modesto Junior College in the Yosemite Community College District; Bradley Davis, chancellor of the West Valley-Mission Community College District in Santa Clara; and Rowena M. Tomaneng, president at San Jose City College in the San Jose-Evergreen Community College District, according to a Nov. 23 press release. A screening committee composed of faculty, staff, students, administrators, board members and community members held initial interviews with candidates and came up with the pool of finalists.



Santanu Bandyopadhyay



Bradley Davis



Rowena M. Tomaneng

The district held forums via Zoom on Nov. 30 to introduce the community to the candidates. Recordings of meetings and the opportunity to offer feedback, along with candidates' full bios are listed on the district's website, smccd.edu/chancellor-search/finalists.php.

Claire plans to retire in June 2023.

The chancellor leads the community college district, which is home to Cañada College in Woodside, College of San Mateo in San Mateo, and Skyline College in San Bruno.

The district's board of trustees are set to interview candidates the week of Jan. 10.

Updates in the Galatolo fraud case

The charges against Galatolo, who is currently out of custody on a \$150,000 cash bail, include

that he allegedly fraudulently reported a \$10,000 charitable donation to the Santa Rosa Junior College Foundation

Fire Relief Fund on his 2017 taxes when it was actually a donation made by the San Mateo Community College District Foundation, according to the District Attorney's Office. His preliminary hearing is set for Dec. 14 at 9 a.m.

Judge Stephanie G. Garratt recused herself from the case in late October after she advised attorneys that she has a conflict, according to a note to members of the media in late October. The DA's Office told the San Mateo Daily Journal that Garratt learned while reviewing email message evidence that she knew one of the people in the messages, the DA's Office said.

Judge Jeffrey R. Finnigan has since taken over the case, according to the DA's Office. ■

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

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Property Tax Time

A reminder to readers that the deadline for paying the first installment of 2022-2023 property taxes is 5 p.m. Monday, December 12. It is usually due Dec. 10 but since the 10th this year falls on a Saturday, taxpayers have until close of business on Monday 12/12 to make their payment. The first installment covers the period July 1 – December 31, 2022. The second installment covering the period January 1-June 30, 2023 is due February 1, 2023, and is delinquent if paid after April 10, 2023. You can pay online or by mail.

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Menlo Park council seeks applicants for District 5 seat

County Supervisor-elect Ray Mueller is leaving mid-term

By Cameron Rebosio

Following Council member Ray Mueller's election to the San Mateo Board of Supervisors and subsequent resignation, the Menlo Park City Council is seeking applications to finish out his term and represent District 5.

Eligible residents must be at least 18 years old, a registered

voter and live in Menlo Park's District 5, which includes the areas of Sharon Heights, Sandhill and some of West Menlo Park. The resident appointed to the position will serve the two years remaining of Mueller's term.

The City Council decided in a Nov. 30 meeting not to hold a special election to replace Mueller, as the vacancy would leave District 5 without

representation on crucial decisions, including the housing element update, which must be approved by the state by Jan. 31. The earliest an election could be held is next May.

"My preference, or default, is to allow voters to choose their



Ray Mueller

elected officials rather than elected officials choosing other elected officials," Council member Drew Combs said. "It seems as though there is really no way to allow the voters to have a say ... (unless it's) vacant for the majority of 2023."

Any person appointed to the City Council will need to commit to attending regular council meetings, and can apply using an online form at

menlopark.gov/city-council or request a paper form at City Hall.

Applications for the District 5 seat are due Dec. 20 at 5 p.m., and the City Council is scheduled to review applications and make an appointment on Dec. 21. ■

Email Staff Writer Cameron Rebosio at crebosio@almanacnews.com.

Police arrest suspect in Menlo Park dating app assault

By Bay City News Service

Police in Menlo Park arrested a 24-year-old Menlo Park man on Tuesday, Dec. 6, who is suspected of robbing and pistol-whipping a man who had been set up via a dating app.

On Nov. 18 at around 6 p.m., officers responded to a call about an armed robbery and

assault in the 3600 block of Haven Avenue. There, police found a 35-year-old man who had been "brutally" attacked and was suffering from multiple injuries, police said. The victim had been struck in the head with a handgun and was then kicked and punched multiple times in the head and face.

Police allege that the victim had met up with a woman he met

on a dating app and the two of them had been sitting in the car talking when two men walked up to the vehicle. The victim was pulled from his car and pistol-whipped, punched and kicked, according to police. The suspect then took the man's cash and fled on foot and the woman reportedly willingly fled the scene with the two men.

Officers were unable to locate

any of the suspects that night, but since then have been "diligently" looking and have collected evidence and other pertinent information to obtain an arrest warrant for the 24-year-old man from Menlo Park.

On Dec. 6, detectives located the man at his residence in the 3600 block of Haven Avenue, the same block of the crime, and he was taken into custody without

incident. Police said that they located the firearm believed to have been used in the assault.

He has been booked into jail on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon and robbery.

This investigation is ongoing. Menlo Park detectives are asking anyone who may have information regarding this case to contact them at 650-330-6300. ■

Stanford to investigate university president's research over scientific misconduct allegations

By Zoe Morgan

Stanford University announced this week that it will investigate allegations of scientific misconduct involving its president, Marc Tessier-Lavigne, after an independent student news outlet

published an article detailing suspected problems with research papers where he's listed as an author.

The Stanford Daily's Nov. 29 article explored possible image manipulation in four papers, including two where Tessier-Lavigne is the lead author.

Scientific misconduct expert Elisabeth Bik detailed to the Daily problems with the papers, including duplicated and altered images.

"There appear to be a lot of visible errors in these papers, and some duplications are suggestive (of) an intention to mislead," Bik said in the Daily article.

University spokesperson Dee Mostofi confirmed on Nov. 30 that Stanford would be launching its own review.

"In the case of the papers in question that list President Tessier-Lavigne as an author, the process will be overseen by the Board of Trustees," Mostofi wrote in an email.

Board of trustees Chair Jerry Yang released a public statement on Dec. 2, with more information about the special committee that he is appointing to examine the allegations. According to Yang, trustee Carol Lam will chair the committee, with Yang and trustees Felix Baker, James Coulter and Jeffrey Stone serving as the other members.

"In initiating this review, I want to assure the Stanford community that appropriate attention and resources are being devoted to this matter. The special committee will conduct its work with all deliberate speed," Yang said, adding

that the committee would be engaging with "expert outside advisors" on its work.

Yang praised Tessier-Lavigne's work as president, writing that "he has effectively led this university with integrity and honor."

Mostofi also released a quote attributed to Tessier-Lavigne, backing Stanford's investigation.

"Scientific integrity is of the utmost importance both to the university and to me personally," Tessier-Lavigne said. "I support this process and will fully cooperate with it, and I appreciate the oversight by the Board of Trustees."

In the case of one of the papers, in which Tessier-Lavigne is listed among 11 authors, the research journal in which it was published has publicly said that it is looking into the issues. The EMBO Journal's editor-in-chief told the Daily that it was doing a "full due diligence screen" of the 2008 paper.

Allegations of misconduct in multiple papers where Tessier-Lavigne is an author have been made on PubPeer, a website where commenters can provide feedback on published scientific articles.

In the case of a 2001 study where Tessier-Lavigne is the lead author, Bik told the Daily

that the paper included altered images.

"The photoshopping was done intentionally, there's no way around it," Bik said, adding that the reason for the changes was unknown and not necessarily falsification.

In earlier comments to the Daily for its initial article, before the investigation was announced, the university acknowledged that there were "issues" with the papers, but said that in two cases the president was not involved in the "generation or presentation" of the questionable images. In two other cases, the university said that the problems "do not affect the data, results or interpretation of the papers," a claim that Bik disputed.

Tessier-Lavigne came to Stanford in 2016 after previously serving as president of The Rockefeller University in New York City. Before that, he worked as an executive at the biotech company Genentech.

His neuroscience research involved the study of brain development and repair, with a focus on degenerative brain diseases like Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease, according to his biography on Stanford's website. ■

Email Staff Writer Zoe Morgan at zmorgan@pawebkly.com.

Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement

TACOS EL GRULLENSE GRILL & BAR
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-292712

The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:

Tacos El Grullense Grill & Bar, located at 2525 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94061, San Mateo County.

Registered owner(s):

TEG-CKD INC.

10 Danford Court

Redwood City, CA 94061

This business is conducted by: A Corporation.

State of Incorporation: CA

The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 10/19/2017.

This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on November 14, 2022.

(ALM Nov. 25; Dec. 2, 9, 16, 2022)

BAY GENERAL CONTRACTOR LLC
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-292700

The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:

Bay General Contractor LLC, located at 308 Sheridan Drive, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.

Registered owner(s):

BAY GENERAL CONTRACTOR LLC

308 Sheridan Drive

Menlo Park, CA 94025

This business is conducted by: A Limited Liability Company, State of Organization: CA.

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 November 10, 2022.

(ALM Dec. 2, 9, 16, 23, 2022)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.
Public Hearing Notices • Resolutions • Bid Notices • Lien Sale
Notices of Petition to Administer Estate • Trustee's Sale

Deadline is Monday at noon.

Call Alicia Santillan at 650-223-6578 or email asantillan@pawebkly.com for assistance with your legal advertising needs.

Manager's Corner



by Sergio Ramirez
General Manager

When I reflect on where West Bay Sanitary District (District) has been and where we are headed, I'm inspired for the future. It's hard to believe that the District has been serving the community of southern San Mateo County for 120 years. It took a petition signed by 35 residents, to the Board of Supervisors of San Mateo County, requesting that an election be called to vote on the formation of the sanitary district. Residents such as Senator C. N. Felton, Edward R. Eyre, J. Leroy Nickel, Spencer E. Slade, J. R. Doyle, M. F. Duff, M. W. Dooley, John MacBain, John H. O'Keefe, E. W. Hopkins, and George A. Batchelder just to name a few, were among the petitioners. An election was then held at the old Menlo Park Hotel (now Springline – The Residences) on December 10, 1902. This established the Menlo Park Sanitary District under the Sanitary District Act of 1891. Because of its expanding service area, the District received a name change to West Bay Sanitary District in 1981.

The first Board of Directors voted in were: George Batchelder, Senator C. N. Felton, E. W. Hopkins, John MacBain, and Spencer E. Slade followed by Timothy Hopkins, E. J. Pringle, Perry Eyre, Thomas Gregory, Joseph Donohoe, and Charles Merrill. Timothy Hopkins was a long time Board of Director and John MacBain served as the District's first Superintendent and Manager. District records show Patrick Kearney was hired to clean the sewer system on a regular basis for



1903 field record book



over 25 years. Some of Mr. Kearney's record entries are found in this 1903 field record book (left). One of his first entries is of pipes and manholes being installed at the corner of Fair Oaks Lane and Middlefield Road in Atherton.

In 1948 the District purchased its first office and corporation yard on 2.76 acres of land from the United States War Assets Administration, within the old Dibble General Hospital, formerly the Hopkins Estate. The District's administration building once stood where the Menlo Park Police Station is, not far from our current location on 500 Laurel Street in Menlo Park.

The District, just as the surrounding area, has always been progressive and eager for progress. In the 1980's the District decommissioned its wastewater treatment facility behind Bedwell Bayfront Park to help form the South Bayside System Authority treatment plant, now Silicon Valley Clean Water, in Redwood Shores. The old treatment facility will be repurposed with a 600 - 800 thousand gallon per day recycled water facility to bring reclaimed water back to our residents and business community. The water is specified to meet stringent Title 22 water reuse standards used for landscape irrigation as well as toilet flushing in commercial buildings. The reclaimed water distribution system will begin in the Bayfront area of Menlo Park with a goal to eventually reach the District's office and the City of Menlo Park's Civic Center and Burgess Park. The facility could not come at a better time in light of the prolonged drought and increased water scarcity.

As the District's General Manager, I am proud of our history, purpose, and excited about what the future has in store for our community.



WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT AWARDS

The District's recycled water program was awarded two Recycled Water and Sustainability awards in 2022! In May of 2022, the District and its contractors (Anderson Pacific Engineering Construction, Inc, Waterworks Engineers, Woodard & Curran, and Freyer & Lauretta) received the American Public Works Association (APWA) Silicon Valley's Project of the Year award. The first award was for the West Bay/Sharon Heights Recycled Water Treatment Plant in the category of a \$5M to \$25M Sustainable or Green project. The second award was for being the Recycled Water Agency of the Year in the small category. The award was given by the WaterReuse Association of California. Both of these awards recognize the Districts and its partner's contributions in support of greater adoption of water reuse.

To that end, as the second year of operation winds down for the West Bay/ Sharon Heights Recycled Water Treatment Plant, the District is proud to report delivery of over 54 million gallons of recycled water in 2021, and over 55 million gallons (and counting!) for 2022. This reuse project has been a tremendous asset to both the partnership and local community by relieving the municipal water system of over 100 million gallons of potable drinking water. This has provided a reliable local water supply that reduces vulnerability to droughts and other water supply constraints.

Also in 2022, the District embarked on the planning and design phase of a new Recycled Water Facility at Bedwell Bayfront Park. This new facility has the potential to deliver 600,000 – 800,000 gallons per day of recycled water for community purposes such as irrigation, toilet flushing, cooling towers, and landscape irrigation.

In addition to providing a dependable, locally-controlled water supply, water recycling provides tremendous environmental benefits. By providing an additional source of water, water recycling can help us find ways to decrease the diversion of water from sensitive ecosystems. As water energy demands and environmental needs grow, water recycling will play a greater role in our overall water supply. Water recycling, along with water conservation and efficiency, can help us to sustainably manage our vital water resources well into the future.

Funding for this \$22.6 million recycled water project (West Bay Sanitary-Sharon Heights) has been provided in full or in part by Proposition 1. The Water Quality, Supply, and Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2014. Funding has also been provided through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, which is capitalized through a variety of funding sources including grants from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and state bond proceeds.



WaterReuse Association of California's 2022 Recycled Water Agency of the Year



American Public Works Association (APWA) Silicon Valley's 2022 Project of the Year

WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT PUMP STATIONS

Have you ever wondered what lies behind these closed doors? West Bay Sanitary District owns and operates 11 lift stations throughout the South San Mateo County service area. Wastewater flows from houses and businesses using a network of underground sewer pipelines. Ninety percent of wastewater in the Sanitary District flows from home to treatment plant using the power of gravity. In some instances, wastewater will reach a point where it can no longer flow by gravity and therefore requires pumping to a higher elevation in order to continue its journey to the treatment plant. Each lift station has a minimum of two pumps to help push the wastewater to a higher point in the system where it will continue to flow towards the treatment plant using gravity. This process continues throughout the District until all the wastewater makes it to the Menlo Park Pump Station located at the corner of Marsh Road and Bayfront Expressway in Menlo Park. Once the wastewater reaches the Menlo Park Pump Station, it is pumped out to our regional treatment plant, Silicon Valley Clean Water. The lift stations are constantly monitored by a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system (SCADA). This high level monitoring system alerts the pump crew if the wastewater in a pump station is getting too high or too low, the PG&E power is out, or if any other parts fail. These sites require weekly maintenance, which is performed by the Districts pump crew. So please remember whatever you put down your drain enters these pump stations and can cause the pumps to fail. So now you know and thank you for being careful with what is flushed down your toilet and house drains.



Pump Stations



Participating in the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation's Tour de Menlo

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

This year West Bay Sanitary District has taken special pride in giving back to the community by adopting a family during the holiday season and giving gifts to the less fortunate. In addition, West Bay was the proud sponsor of community events such as the Menlo Park Concert in the Park and provided important community resource information at the Belle Haven Community Fair. Recently the District sponsored the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation by participating in the Tour de Menlo to raise funds for need-based college scholarships for local students and other charities such as Boys & Girls Club, the Second Harvest Food Bank, and Life Moves. District staff will help provide jackets for those in need this holiday season by participating in Coats for Kids.

For a sewer emergency or sewer-related problems, please call us first! You can reach us day or night at (650) 321-0384. If the main public sewer line is blocked, only West Bay has the authority to clear the system. If the public sewer main line is clear, we may advise you to contact a plumbing contractor to resolve the issue on your property.



Lighting up the season

Menlo Park hosts tree lighting event, bringing back the holiday tradition for the first time since COVID

By Cameron Rebosio. Photos by Magali Gauthier

Menlo Park held its tree lighting event for the first time since 2019 in Fremont Park on Friday, Dec. 2. The event included an inflatable snow globe, glowing snow fairies and performances by local children. The event wrapped up with the annual tree lighting, and a snow machine for attendees to play in.

The event was on a multi-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which hit pause on most citywide events from March 2020 through this year. The festive event was attended by many city officials including Mayor Betsy Nash and Council members Jen Wolosin and Ray Mueller. ■



Clockwise from top left: Harby Hayer holds his son, Chance, as artificial snow falls around them at Menlo Park's annual tree lighting in Fremont Park on Dec. 2; Jack Fichtner tries to catch some artificial snow; Hillview Middle School eighth grader Raevynn Cantrell sings Feliz Navidad to the crowd.

Facing page, clockwise from top left: Theresia Schnurr, left, plays with her daughter Cordelia inside an inflatable snow globe; the tree at Fremont Park glows with lights; families line up for a sweet treat; dancers from Dance Expressions perform; the crowd watches a troupe of dancers perform; Kassie Rukstalis, dressed as a snow fairy, left, speaks with Felicia and her mother, Catherine Duong.





Give back locally

WITH A GIFT TO THE HOLIDAY FUND

Contributions to the Holiday Fund go directly to programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers and foundations contributed \$309,000 from more than 170 donors for the 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be matched, to the extent possible, by generous community organizations, foundations and individuals, including the Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. No administrative costs will be deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law. All donations to the Holiday Fund will be shared equally among the 10 recipient agencies listed on this page.

DONATE ONLINE:
almanacnews.com/holiday_fund



The organizations below provide major matching grants to the Holiday Fund.

Rotary Club of Menlo Park

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Please consider donating online, which enables your gift to be processed immediately. The secure website is:
almanacnews.com/holiday_fund

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____

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I wish to designate my contribution as follows: (select one)

☐ In my name as shown above

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The **Almanac**



**The Almanac
 Holiday Fund
 2022**

All donors and their gift amounts will be published in The Almanac unless the boxes below are checked.

☐ I wish to contribute anonymously.

☐ Please withhold the amount of my contribution.

Please make checks payable to:
 Embarcadero Media Foundation

Send coupon and check to:
The Almanac Holiday Fund
450 Cambridge Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94306

The Almanac Holiday Fund is sponsored by the Embarcadero Media Foundation and Silicon Valley Community Foundation. Both are 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organizations, allowing your donation to be tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Boys & Girls Club of the Peninsula

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.

Health Connected

Serves over 5,000 students and their families each year through comprehensive sexual health education programs. Students learn to have ongoing communication with parents and to make informed decisions that will apply to their lives, now and in the future.

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

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.

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.

St. Francis Center

Helps low-income, working families become self-supporting members of the community by providing long-term solutions through educational programs for children and parents, as well as after-school programming at Siena Youth Centers. St. Francis Center also provides housing, food and clothing services to address short-term needs.

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

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.

DONATE ONLINE: almanacnews.com/holiday_fund



The Almanac Holiday Fund 2022

**THANK YOU FOR DONATING
TO THE HOLIDAY FUND**

Almanac Holiday Fund Donor List

As of December 6th, 57 donors have contributed
\$48,695 to the Holiday Fund.

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

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StarVista helps connect teens with counseling services

By Zena Andreani/
Special to The Almanac

Lucy is 16 years old and attends a public high school in San Mateo County. She moved to this county after her mother separated from her father one year ago. She lives full-time with her mother and has not had any contact with her father since they moved.

In school, her teachers and counselors noticed a change in her disposition and made several referrals to the wellness counselor. Each time, Lucy (whose name has been changed to protect her privacy) resisted speaking with counselors and said that she has “nothing to share.”

Lucy’s health class recently received the StarVista’s Crisis Centers Suicide Prevention Presentation. Throughout the presentation, Lucy appeared uncomfortable — moving frequently in her chair, taking long exhales, and asked to leave the presentation several times. During a small group activity, the facilitator pulled Lucy to the side of the room and verbalized their observations. Lucy’s eyes began to water as she explained the information was “too hard to hear” and “felt too real.”

The facilitator offered emotional support and offered to talk with Lucy more after the presentation was over. In this conversation, the facilitator opened up about her parents’ separation. She said that she wanted to talk more about it but felt scared and anxious about opening up. The facilitator helped Lucy understand the benefits of talking with someone



Courtesy Star Vista

Zena Andreani (left), assistant director of StarVista’s Crisis Center, stands with Crisis Center staff and volunteers in downtown San Mateo last year.



The Almanac
Holiday
Fund
2022

and encouraged Lucy to make an appointment with her school wellness counselor.

The facilitator also provided her with additional crisis center resources, such as teen crisis services, which is available by chat and text at sanmateocrisis.org, and the crisis line where she could speak confidentially about her struggles.

Lucy said she was glad she has many options for support and said the presentation helped her feel more open to talk about her own experiences.

StarVista is one of this year’s beneficiaries of The Almanac’s Holiday Fund. Donations are

divided equally among this year’s 10 nonprofit organizations and 100% of the funds raised go directly to the recipients. Donations to the Holiday Fund can be made at almanacnews.com/holiday_fund.

StarVista serves more than 32,000 people throughout San Mateo County every year, including children, youth, and families, through its counseling, case management, skill development, and crisis prevention programs. StarVista’s Crisis Center provides crisis intervention and suicide prevention services throughout the county, including its 24-hour Crisis Hotline at 650-579-0350. For information, go to star-vista.org or call 650-591-9623. ■

Zena Andreani is the assistant director of StarVista’s Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Center program.

MEASURE V

continued from page 5

Mateo County’s elections office, Measure V failed in almost all of the city’s precincts. Election reports show that the measure won majority support in only three precincts in Menlo Park. One is directly beside the Flood School lot, where the Ravenswood City School District has been trying to redevelop a vacant 2.6-acre lot on the former site of the Flood Magnet School in Suburban Park. The school district aims to build up to 90 units of low-income housing prioritized for staff on the campus, which is currently zoned for single-family housing.

The project has been met with heavy pushback from Suburban Park residents who live in close

proximity to the vacant school site, some of whom spearheaded the effort to pass Measure V.

Two other precincts, which totaled only three votes, unanimously cast ballots in favor of Measure V. The precinct in favor of Measure V encompasses the Suburban Park neighborhood, from Bay Road up to Hedge Road. The precinct cast 444 votes in favor of the measure, or 70.8%, and 183 against.

During the election season, proponents of the ballot measure said that this would give residents a voice in what happens to their neighborhoods, as opposed to letting the City Council make decisions. Opponents and local housing advocates warned it would block future development, particularly of low-income housing, and raised nearly \$400,000 for the

No on V campaign.

Resident Valerie Bellofatto, speaking on behalf of Menlo Balance, the group that put forward Measure V, told The Almanac in an email that the group had no comment on the election results or next steps, and that residents will now be “stuck with a major four-story high building in a residential area.”

Will Eger, chief business officer of Ravenswood City School District, said that the district is currently working to finalize the agreement with Alliance Development Services and that he hopes the Menlo Park City Council allows them to build 90 units. ■

Email Staff Writer Cameron Rebosio at crebosio@almanacnews.com.

HASKO

continued from page 5

are violated; there's criminal penalties," said Town Attorney Cara Silver, who noted it's reasonable for Hasko to examine her potential conflict of interest.

Silver told *The Almanac* on Dec. 5 that she and Hasko have had several conversations and no final decision has been made.

Earlier in the year, Nathhorst Triangle residents were vocal in opposing a program that would have rezoned other portions of the neighborhood, some of which are owner-occupied. In the last week, they gathered 80 signatures for a petition to limit the upzoning of the two sites, which they submitted to the town.

In March, former San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed — representing Nathhorst homeowners who don't want their

neighborhood upzoned — filed a massive Public Records Act request for all documents and communications related to the Ad Hoc Housing Element Committee's work. Mayor Craig Hughes said one resident went so far as to threaten to bankrupt the town if the housing element wasn't to his liking.

Residents have opposed any new development in Portola Valley over concerns about sully the town's rural character and increasing safety risk by building more homes in a region that is already at a heightened risk for wildfires.

Hasko's decision comes in the midst of a fast-approaching Jan. 31 deadline for the town to have a compliant housing element approved by the state.

Housing element discussion

Kopf-Sill was frank about the housing element process. She

explained that the Planning Commission has three meetings over 13 days to meet this deadline. She said that towns like Woodside are not meeting because "they have no chance of having a compliant housing element by Jan. 31, so why kill yourselves, right?" (Woodside Town Manager Kevin Bryant told *The Almanac* in an email that the town is working to submit a revised draft to the state by the deadline.)

Kopf-Sill also claimed that Los Altos Hills and Atherton also have no chance of a compliant housing element by the deadline. Atherton Town Manager George Rodericks told *The Almanac* in an email that the town's intent is to do everything it can to meet the Jan. 31 deadline and officials believe that that "is achievable."

"They got their comments back and they have to find new sites," Kopf-Sill said. "That's the hard part. We have the opportunity to have a compliant housing element."

The changes that staff made to the draft element, which was initially filed with the state this summer, added "detail to the programs without substantially changing the policies," noted Planning and Building Director Laura Russell.

For example, the Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan is updated to state that "any residential or mixed-use projects constructed along the Alpine Scenic corridor shall be designed to respect the scenic principles set forth in this plan." It also states that any residential or mixed-use projects constructed along the corridor shall provide sufficient setbacks for the town's use of Alpine Road as a major evacuation corridor.

More on the Nathhorst sites

The town's plan would allow for six units per acre at 4370 Alpine Road, which could

result in nine townhouses, rezoning it from office space to mixed-use residential development. The northwest portion of the site includes a former tennis court and parking area that are not being used. The property owner has also expressed interest in redeveloping the property in a meeting with staff.

The 4394 Alpine Road site is located on 1.18 acres and is currently vacant and consists of a grassy field, next to Linwood Realty. This site will be rezoned from commercial to a new multi-family district that will allow 20 units to the acre, meaning about 23 units could be developed.

The petition started by Nathhorst neighbors outlines certain requests for the future of the 4394 and 4370 Alpine Road sites. They have concerns about three-story commercial and residential structures potentially being built immediately adjacent to homes in Nathhorst Neighborhood. It "would pose (a) significant environmental and safety impact on this neighborhood," the neighbors said.

"High density rezoning of this area would also have a significant impact on a large portion of Portola Valley residents adding numerous people and cars to an evacuation route at the most busy intersection in town," they wrote.

Residents behind the petition said they would agree to rezoning 4394 Alpine Road at 20 units per acre of single family residences, either one-story or two-story, with no three-story structures. They would also like a 30-foot rear setback for the protection of privacy to existing homes within Nathhorst.

They are against any three-story structures at 4370 Alpine Road and want a maximum of nine units built on the property. They want any structures adjacent to Nathhorst Avenue to be one story. They also

sought to preserve all general plan open space from development and preserve and protect the creek. Lastly, they ask for a 50-foot setback from Nathhorst Avenue.

Concerns over the density bonus law

Several residents at the meeting questioned the implications of developers taking advantage of the state's density bonus law, which entitle developers to build more units than would otherwise be allowed by zone. They urged the town to develop on its own properties to avoid this since it would have control over how big a project could get and told officials to plan for the worst case scenario.

Development projects can qualify for a density bonus ranging from 20% to 50% depending on the proposed project. Only projects that are actually proposed as 100% affordable may qualify for the 80% density bonus.

For example, if a site is zoned for 20 units per acre, a 50% bonus could allow for up to 30 units to be built. To qualify for any density bonus the project must be at least five units; affordable rental units are deed restricted for at least 55 years; affordable for-sale units must be sold to income-qualified owners and subject to an equity sharing agreement.

Nathhorst resident Tammy Cole said the town could be putting their families in danger by sacrificing their privacy and safety by "changing the general plan whenever it is inconvenient with your (the town's) plan to satisfy the state."

Peter Draeger, CFO of Draeger's Markets and a Portola Valley resident, said that town officials are naive if they assume the density bonus law "will not be taken to its extreme by some developer, by somebody who doesn't care for Portola Valley."

"The state is going to be very accommodating of what they (developers) want," he said.

What's next

The Planning Commission's next meeting was set for Wednesday, Dec. 7, after *The Almanac's* press deadline. It will review its changes to the element and make a formal recommendation to the council on Tuesday, Dec. 13. In January, the Town Council will review and make necessary adoptions before resubmitting it to the state. ■

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

JOIN WOODSIDE FIRE FOR
**CHRISTMAS
AT THE
FIREHOUSE**

- VISIT WITH SANTA
- TAKE A PHOTO
- BRING A TOY FOR OUR TOY DRIVE

**DECEMBER 14TH,
7:00 - 8:30 PM**

**FIRE STATION 19
4091
JEFFERSON AVE.**

Richard Henry Horn, M.D.

March 18, 1930 - October 22, 2022

Richard ("Dick") Henry Horn, 92, passed away peacefully in his sleep at home on October 22, 2022. His wife and love of his life Jeanie (née Fox) predeceased him on April 11, 2015. His memorial service will be held on Friday, December 16, 2022 at 11:00a.m. at the Menlo Church, 950 Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94025. Dick's full obituary was published on November 4 and can be seen online on this paper's Lasting Memories obituary page.



PAID OBITUARY

New Boys and Girls Club CEO wants to bring opportunity to all

By Cameron Rebosio

Following the death of long-time CEO Peter Fortenbaugh, the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula's new CEO Jenny Obiaya is working to preserve his legacy and further opportunities for local children.

Obiaya joined the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula (BGCP) in 2020 as the chief program officer and started working alongside Fortenbaugh as a co-CEO in October 2021. Fortenbaugh died in October following a cancer diagnosis, leaving Obiaya as the sole CEO.

"Peter, over 20 years, really built that team that shared common values," Obiaya said. "At the heart of those common values was this idea that all students deserve opportunities in life, and the arbitrary circumstances into which you were born should not determine what opportunities and outcomes you have in life."

In his time as the CEO, Fortenbaugh grew the organization from an annual budget of \$2 million to \$28 million, expanded the number of students served from 400 just 3,500, and extended the reach of its programs from four sites to 24.

Fortenbaugh used to call himself the chief community builder rather than CEO, a legacy that Obiaya said she hopes to carry on in her own tenure. Obiaya



attended Harvard University and worked with Teach for America, but believes that her experience as a mother has the greatest impact on her methods with the club.

"For so many families living here in San Mateo County ... opportunities are inaccessible because costs are a barrier, or language, or whatever the case may be," Obiaya said. "And so I'm leading with like a fierce passion and commitment to leveling the playing field and empowering our families with access to opportunity."

The BGCP is currently working on the biggest expansion in the organization's history, and it will soon offer services stretching from Daly City to East Palo Alto. Obiaya said that the BGCP is currently focused on the student learning loss that happened during the pandemic.

"We consider ourselves to be the second shift for schools, and we extend the learning day and the learning year through our after-school and summer programs," Obiaya said. "We're constantly reevaluating our curriculum and making changes and additions to try to have the biggest impact possible."



Courtesy Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula

Jenny Obiaya, left, is the new CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of the Peninsula, one of the nonprofits supported by The Almanac Holiday Fund.

The BGCP has a wide range of programs, from athletics to academic assistance, for kindergartners through career help for people post-college. The organization is also adding mental health help programs. According to Obiaya, Director of Mental Health Daniella Velasquez has been creating a

team of therapists to expand one-on-one and group therapy services for students.

Obiaya said that she looks forward to the projects that can be accomplished with help from the community.

"There's still so much unmet need out there," Obiaya said. "The biggest barrier to being

able to meet more of that need is our ability to fund these programs ... we're going to need folks' continued investment in BGCP, and belief in our mission." ■

Email Staff Writer Cameron Rebosio at crebosio@almanacnews.com.

TEACHERS

continued from page 1

that he found the communications to be "underhanded" attacks. "This misuse of their bully pulpit, under the guise of transparency, feels like just another attack on educators who are simply advocating for what we believe is in the best interests of our students."

The Nov. 29 communication "fails to acknowledge several important points and glosses over others in a disingenuous representation of the PVSD position," Sato said. For example, showing "maximum total compensation" that includes a grandfathered health plan only available to less than a third of its educators does not address the challenge of attracting new staff. Comprehensive health-care coverage is a critical element in attracting applicants, he said.

He said even the most recent proposal would not allow an educator to cover any family members without significant out-of-pocket costs, while

district administrators are fully covered.

Zarea said in an email that the information fliers are "pure facts, without adjectives, blaming language or assertions of malicious motivation."

"Every subject area is explained clearly — including the 'context' which PVTA asserts is missing," she said. "For example, the two different groups of employees receiving different levels of district-paid health premiums is clearly described and clarified. The district bears no ill will toward the employees who serve our students, or the representative of those employees, the latter of which is merely carrying out its advocacy obligations in the best interests of its members. We will never malign or demonize our teachers or their representative; we would ask the same of them regarding the district. We remain committed to negotiating in good faith and resolving our differences in the forum prescribed by law for accomplishing this — the negotiations table."

On Oct. 27, teachers spoke at a school board meeting about their frustrations with district officials for wanting to add an extra 30 minutes to workdays.

The district's latest proposal includes moving to a new salary structure to provide all teachers with pay comparable to what's offered by neighboring districts. Base salaries in the district start at \$64,108. Teachers can earn up to \$132,969. The Menlo Park City School District starts at \$70,832 and tops out at \$140,477. Superintendent Roberta Zarea noted that Menlo Park district teachers work three extra days per year and 15 extra minutes per day, which is one of the reasons for their higher base salary.

Some teachers will receive up to a 50.7% increase over the prior year, but no teacher will receive less than a 7.9% increase for 2022-23. The average increase would be 20%, retroactive July 1, with an estimated average base salary for 2022-23 of \$129,514 under the new proposal, according

to the district.

Teachers would also see a 3% increase for the 2023-24 school year. There would also be increased contributions to teachers' insurance coverage, according to the district.

Sato said that no other district in San Mateo County has an eight-hour instructional day, and that the district has made false claims that it's necessary to meet state mandates.

Under new legislation, districts are required to provide extended learning opportunities for students, Zarea said. The proposal not only addresses this need, but also promotes student safety and supervision before and after the instructional day, she said. The additional time also increases opportunities for staff collaboration around curriculum and instruction. She said the proposed salary increase over the next two years includes compensation for this increased time.

Parents and other community members spoke in support of the teachers and expressed

concern about the district sending out the fact sheets to parents during the Nov. 17 meeting.

Others said that the district can afford to pay its teachers more.

"We live in one of the wealthiest ZIP codes in the country," said Lauren Bochnowski, whose three children attend district schools. "We can make the appropriate cost of living adjustments for our teachers." ■

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

LEHUA GREENMAN

"All Gave Some. Some Gave All."

December 7, 1941

Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

650.245.1845 COMPASS

Prohibition rum runners and deadly shipwrecks

Pescadero's landmark Pigeon Point Lighthouse turns 150

By Kate Bradshaw

A lighthouse that has stood sentinel over San Mateo County's rugged coast since the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant turned 150 on Nov. 15.

The 115-foot tall Pigeon Point Lighthouse in Pescadero — among the tallest lighthouses in the U.S. — has overseen some of the biggest commercial shifts in American life over the past century and a half, and the dangerous waters it watches over have pulled no shortage of mariners to their deaths. Today, it's a historic site that attracts visitors from around the world who stay at the hostel on the property, but it's also a landmark in need of repairs, which are finally on the way thanks to recent funding.

The dangerous history of Pigeon Point

The Pescadero area was originally a popular fishing spot for Ohlone people, but was later settled in the late 1800s by people from Italy, Portugal and the Azores, according to Don West and Joseph Ketchett in "The Coast that Time Forgot: The Complete Tour Guide to the San Mateo Coast."

It took four shipwrecks along the same section of the treacherous San Mateo County coast in the years between 1853 and 1868 before the lighthouse was finally funded and built, according to "Shipwrecks, Scalawags, and Scavengers: The Storied Waters of Pigeon Point," a 2007 book by maritime historian JoAnn Semones, a docent at Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park.

The first of those shipwrecks, on June 6, 1853, gave Pigeon Point its name. The clipper ship the Carrier Pigeon was on its maiden voyage from Boston to San Francisco and had traveled more than 15,000 miles after rounding Cape Horn at the southernmost tip of South America and heading back north again. But as it neared San Francisco along the San Mateo County coast, heavy fog and strong winds pulled the ship off course and the ship hit an outcropping of craggy rocks. A couple of people referring to the area afterward reportedly called it Carrier Pigeon Point but then shortened it to Pigeon Point, Semones wrote.

Another shipwreck, the Sir John Franklin, happened in



Devin Roberts

Pigeon Point Lighthouse is perched on a cliff in Pescadero. Shipwrecks routinely occurred there in the 1800s and early 1900s.

1865. Mysteriously, dozens of the barrels of spirits reportedly on board disappeared, while others that were recovered appeared to have been tampered with and replaced with saltwater — indicating thirsty Coastsiders may have had something to do with the disappearing liquor.

Two more shipwrecks happened at Pigeon Point in 1866 and 1868. The Coya and Hellespont were ships that carried coal from Australia. When the Coya crashed at Pigeon Point, all but three of its 29 passengers drowned. Then the Hellespont wrecked, killing 11, according to Semones.

After the Hellespont's wreck, H.A. Scofield, editor of the San Mateo County Gazette, called on the maritime community to push government officials to make a lighthouse and a fog bell or whistle a reality at Pigeon Point.

"Pigeon Point is the most extensive promontory on the coast south of the Golden Gate, and the point seems especially adapted for a lighthouse. No other place on the Pacific Coast has proved so fatal to navigators as this locality," he wrote at the time.

Getting a lighthouse built along the treacherous coast was also delayed by the Civil War, and by debates over whether the lighthouse should be installed at Pigeon Point or at Año Nuevo. In 1868, Congress set aside \$90,000 for the project, and in 1871 a fog signal was installed at Pigeon Point. In 1872, the lighthouse was completed and first lit on Nov. 15 using a first-order Fresnel lens — which is made up of 1,008 prisms, stands 16 feet tall and weighs

2,000 pounds, according to California State Parks.

But the lighthouse and fog signal didn't stop shipwrecks from happening, Semones wrote. Many more wrecks would follow in the decades to come. The J.W. Seaver wrecked at Año Nuevo Point in 1887, and the San Vicente, a steamer traveling to Santa Cruz from San Francisco and filled with holiday merchandise, wrecked Dec. 20 that year, killing 12.

Then there was the Colombia in 1896, which wrecked after the captain missed a fog signal. It became a tourist destination for visitors looking to pick up their own relics from a shipwreck. There was also the Point Arena, which hauled lumber up and down the West Coast and lost its mooring, crashing against the rocks. The wrecked steamer was ultimately burned for navigation safety. As one local put it, "It would just not have looked good to have a wrecked ship in front of a lighthouse."

Pigeon Point's role in the Prohibition era

By the end of World War I, shipping waned at Pigeon Point as it became cheaper to transport materials over land and it was closed as a port. But seafaring activity on the San Mateo County coast spiked again when Prohibition began in 1920. The caves of Pigeon Point in particular became a popular spot for rum runners to stash their goods.

When Prohibition started, the boundary of where international waters started was 3 miles offshore, so it became a popular way for coastal boat owners to make money. Rum

runners would meet ships carrying alcohol from other countries, particularly whiskey from Mexico and Canada, to bring back to the coast for distribution. Enforcement got harsher after the "rum line" boundary shifted to 12 miles offshore in 1924 and the Coast Guard beefed up its personnel and boat count, Semones writes.

The Mygrants family that had lived at the Pigeon Point Lighthouse said that at one point, the rum runners were brazen enough to use the lighthouse property's derrick for unloading their wares. And Jesse Mygrants, assistant lighthouse keeper, was once forced at gunpoint to drive rum runners down the coast.

In 1929, Pigeon Point had its worst shipwreck: the San Juan, a passenger steamer, collided with an oil tanker. Because of the fog, they didn't see each other until it was too late, and the wreck killed 75 people.

Starting in World War I and continuing through World War II, Monterey's Cannery Row rose to prominence and the city became the "sardine capital of the world." Two sardine fishing boats from Monterey crashed into the rocks at Pigeon Point in 1932 and 1934. But by the early 1950s, overfishing had dried up much of the sardine supply, according to Semones.

A growing tourist destination

In 1960, the Coast Guard built several houses for Coast Guard families near the lighthouse that would eventually become what's now the Pigeon Point hostel, said Jeff Parry, general manager of the hostel.

In the 1970s, then-Gov. Jerry Brown pushed for a chain of hostels along the California coast. While not many were built, some remain, including at the Montara Lighthouse, Fort Mason and Point Reyes, Parry said.

The hostel first opened in 1981, geared toward young people on a budget looking to travel and learn. Parry said that since he began working at the hostel in 1997, the tourism to the area has increased tenfold. When the pandemic hit, Hostels International, the non-profit concessionaire that runs the hostel at Pigeon Point, was hit hard, losing about 80% of its staff. "It was pretty devastating to the whole organization," Parry said.

The Pigeon Point hostel

transitioned to a vacation rental model, allowing people to rent out each of the three buildings individually. It's proven to be successful for now, and they plan to reopen the site as a hostel in the summer. Each building accommodates about 14 to 15 people. The site is also used midweek for the "Exploring New Horizons" program, a three-day, two-night science and environmental education program for fifth grade classes, he said.

The lighthouse was automated in 1972 and is still used for navigation by the Coast Guard. But the tower has fallen into disrepair.

The tower was closed in 2001 after a large metal piece fell off it, and it's been off-limits to the public and deteriorating ever since, according to the Half Moon Bay Review. An \$18 million state-funded project is now in the works to restore the tower. As of now, the money has been set aside and a lot of behind-the-scenes work has gone into readying the project to go out to bid, said Linda Hitchcock, senior park and recreation specialist and one of the people leading the tower restoration project.

Much of the funding will pay for restoring the tower's top section, which had been subject to water damage and rot, according to the Half Moon Bay Review. The project is estimated to take at least 18 months and will involve reinforcing the interior with concrete beams and replacing the roof among other repairs, according to Peninsula Open Space Trust. The restoration work will begin after a contractor is selected. An advisory group is working on structuring public access once the project is complete, according to State Parks.

"To be realistic, we are probably still two years +/- away from the project's completion," said Janet Oulton in the Coastsides State Parks Association's most recent newsletter.

In the meantime, the park recently received a \$10,000 grant from San Mateo County's Measure K funds to create an online virtual tour of the lighthouse tower using a 3D model developed by CyArk. The goal is to complete the virtual tour in time for the anniversary, according to the State Parks website. ■

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LAWSUIT*continued from page 1*

and taken to the County Jail rather than to a hospital and her car was towed, according to the lawsuit, which was amended twice.

Failures at the jail

Staff at the jail also failed to respond to her symptoms and violated jail policy regarding basic medical evaluations.

A close friend of Riegman's, learning that her car had been towed, repeatedly contacted the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office over the course of at least five hours to inform them that Riegman had been ill for several days and was in need of medical attention. She was told that inmates were held for at least six hours and nothing could be done about it. The county jail had no procedure for documenting telephone contacts from friends or family stating that an inmate was ill, medically at risk, or in need of medical attention. Nor did the jail have any procedure for conveying such information to medical or correctional staff, according to the lawsuit.

When Riegman arrived at the jail, a phlebotomist drew her blood for a drug screening. The laboratory results for the drawn blood subsequently revealed that Riegman's blood contained neither alcohol nor narcotics, the lawsuit said.

The deputy informed the phlebotomist that Riegman had been ill with the flu for days and Riegman added that she had been "horribly ill," but she was not medically evaluated, according to the lawsuit.

During fingerprinting, Riegman was unable to stand unsupported, and had to lean on office equipment. She was supposed to be screened by a nurse upon intake into the jail; Correctional Health Services regulations required the arresting officer to provide the medical intake screening nurse with both a verbal account and a written report of observations. None of the arresting deputies provided the information to the medical intake screening nurse,

according to the lawsuit.

The same regulation also required the nurse to ask the arresting or transporting officer about the arrestee's medical complaints, medical conditions and behavior. The nurse didn't make any such inquiries, didn't take her temperature and didn't listen to her lungs with a stethoscope, which are all required under regulation, the lawsuit noted. Yet, despite never performing these procedures, The nurse allegedly falsely recorded a normal temperature and "clear breath sounds" on the medical screening form.

The nurse testified in a deposition that it was a normal procedure at the San Mateo County Jail to remain behind a metal screen throughout the intake examination. Nurses normally omitted listening to the lungs, but they filled out the intake form to indicate they had done so and that the breath sounds were clear. Nurses only listened to the lungs if an arrestee was suffering from asthma or had obvious acute respiratory distress, she said, according to the lawsuit.

But if she had taken Riegman's temperature, she would have discovered that Riegman had a fever. If she had also listened to her lungs, the nurse would have discovered Riegman had pneumonia and she would have sent Riegman to the hospital instead of into a jail cell, the lawsuit said.

Riegman was instead booked into the jail and put in a regular jail cell without the nurse even checking the boxes on the intake form for poor coordination or drug or alcohol intoxication.

Riegman could have been placed in a sobering cell, which is designed for inmates who are "sobering up" from alcohol or drug intoxication. Inmates there have their health and safety monitored by closed circuit television and receive services from medical and correctional personnel.

A correctional officer checks the sobering cells every 15 minutes to monitor the inmate's breathing and consciousness. A nurse also checks and speaks to each inmate every hour, provides fluids on a regular basis and

records a medical evaluation. If an inmate is not improving in four hours and isn't more alert, taking fluids or responding to questions, a physician is required to immediately evaluate the inmate, the lawsuit noted.

None of these precautions were taken with Riegman, although she was barely able to walk and needed a correctional officer's support, jail video allegedly showed. Hours later, suffering from severe body cramping, she collapsed on the hard cell floor, where she became semi-conscious. At 6:44 p.m. two correctional officers discovered Riegman sprawled on the cell floor, writhing and unable to rise.

They still didn't take her condition seriously, according to the lawsuit.

"You must really like alcohol," Riegman recalled that one of the officers allegedly said.

Four different officers stood watching Riegman on the floor, but none helped, according to the lawsuit. They didn't call for medical aid. Five minutes after she was first discovered, an arriving deputy sergeant finally helped Riegman up from the floor and, supporting her under her arms, aided her to the nurse's station as she was doubled over.

At the nurse's station, Riegman dropped her head onto the counter. The on-duty nurse did not provide medical care. The "Correctional Health Services Progress Report" at 7:14 p.m. instead stated that Riegman was "answering questions appropriately," but was in an "altered state."

The nurse then "medically cleared" Riegman for release.

As Riegman staggered out of her chair, she hit the wall and nearly fell.

Correctional officers also considered that Riegman should undergo a psychiatric evaluation, known as a "5150," and they requested a social worker to evaluate her. When he arrived, however, he was waived away, according to the social worker's notes, the lawsuit said.

Riegman had been in the custody of the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office for approximately nine hours by the time

of her release. She required two officers to help her stagger to the lobby. Only then did one of the correctional officers belatedly recognize that Riegman was seriously ill and offered to call an ambulance.

Riegman asked to call her friend instead. At that point, she was so ill that she required help telephoning her friend from her own cell phone. She was incoherent and required the assistance of the deputy to talk to her friend, according to the lawsuit.

Her body was 'shutting down'

When Riegman and her friend arrived at the Sequoia Hospital emergency room in Redwood City at approximately 8:30 p.m. she had a 103-degree fever and an elevated respiration rate. She was promptly admitted to the hospital with a diagnosis of acute left-sided pneumonia, sepsis, acute hyponatremia (low blood sodium level that causes muscle weakness, cramps, seizures or coma), and acute metabolic encephalopathy, a brain condition causing delirium and confusion.

The doctor told her friend that Riegman was fortunate to reach the hospital when she did, because her body was close to shutting down. She was at risk for coma and even death, the lawsuit said.

Riegman remained hospitalized for eight days. It took six months before Riegman fully recovered her physical strength and mental clarity.

The damage she suffered wasn't only physical, according to the lawsuit. Riegman also found her business was affected. One of her regular clients took her horse out of training with Riegman because she wasn't strong enough to provide the full training required.

The sheriff's office had also publicized Riegman's arrest, damaging her reputation. Although they were aware that Riegman was critically ill and not under the influence of drugs, two days after her release they posted a notice on the internet that Riegman had been booked for driving under the influence.

The notice, published by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office on Dec. 18, 2019, identified Riegman by name, age and city of residence and described the car accident. She "displayed objective signs and symptoms of being under the influence of drugs," it stated.

While Riegman was convalescing, she received a letter in January from a prospective private client in Woodside. The person had planned to hire Riegman to give riding lessons to her two granddaughters but had changed her mind: "[S]ince news that you were booked on DUI became available online, I cannot risk hiring you. ... I regret we will not be able to have you give our granddaughters riding lessons in the foreseeable future."

Two weeks later, on Feb. 1, 2020, Riegman received a letter from Woodside Junior Riders, a well-established organization where she applied for head instructor's position at a two-month-long summer session. The position would have paid Riegman approximately \$12,000 and would likely lead to obtaining private clients. Riegman was rejected, with the organization noting that although she seemed "highly qualified," two parents said she had a recent DUI arrest.

Riegman also believed that she lost three or four other clients who removed their horses from training with her because of the posting about her arrest, and she had trouble attracting new clients.

The settlement paid Riegman \$400,000 on behalf of the county from The Doctor's Company, an insurance firm; the county of San Mateo paid her \$56,000 and agreed to pay Riegman's attorney, Violet Elizabeth Grayson, \$294,000.

The settlement does not affix blame to the county or any of its individual deputies. It also is not compensation for lost wages. It is compensation for "noneconomic losses," including emotional distress and pain and suffering. The case was officially closed by the court on Sept. 14, 2022. ■

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WILLOW VILLAGE*continued from page 5*

getting enough assurance that the things that we want and the things that the community has asked for are going to actually happen in a way that serves the residents?"

The final project timeline starts infrastructure work in late 2023, and begins construction of the highly anticipated

grocery store in 2025. The project is expected to be completed by 2029.

The conditional development permit (CDP) includes language from prior City Council meetings to promote the environmental welfare of the site. Concessions from Meta included using the lowest emission construction equipment possible, provided it doesn't increase costs, as well as photographing

the nearby Willow wetlands at night, in order to compare light pollution levels as the project progresses.

"Some things we can live with, and some things we will continue to talk about moving forward," Council member Cecilia Taylor said. "Many folks in my community that have actually reached out to me directly that believe that this project will be good for the community, and

also for the city of Menlo Park."

The community and council have both been heavily interested in the full-service grocery store that Meta has promised. In negotiations, the timeline for the grocery store development has been moved up to begin in 2025, and it will get an additional \$1 million rent subsidy from Meta in addition to the previously offered two-years subsidy.

The City Council

voted unanimously to approve the project, with Council member Drew Combs absent. Combs, a Meta employee, has recused himself from all deliberations regarding Willow Village.

A second vote to formally approve the CDP is set for the Dec. 13 City Council meeting. ■

Email Staff Writer Cameron Rebosio at crebosio@almanacnews.com.

Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Yule ties

Peninsula Women's Chorus holiday concert celebrates the many ways we're connected

By Heather Zimmerman

With any performance, any work of art, it's fair to assume that performers and artists have put their thoughts, feelings and ideas into it, but even so, it's pretty unusual for a choir to sing lyrics that reflect the words and thoughts of individual members.

Composer Jennifer Wilsey's "Would You Like to Have it All?" was commissioned by the Peninsula Women's Chorus (PWC), and features a libretto crafted from interviews with PWC members.

The piece is making its premiere as part of the chorus' "Songs of Connection: The Ties that Bind" concert Dec. 10 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Palo Alto. The chorus will also perform the program Dec. 18 at Mission Santa Clara.

"Songs of Connection" celebrates friendship and many other kinds of relationships, the importance of which may come into clearer focus in holiday times.

"I started thinking about how holiday concerts are often about relationships and gathering. But there isn't a lot of diversity, necessarily, in the way that we present what relationships are. And so I got really excited about a concert that can capture lots of different kinds of relationships and not just the holiday version of mother and child that we sometimes see," said Peninsula Women's Chorus Artistic Director Anne Hege.

Wilsey's piece is especially personal for the chorus, with the text for the work created collaboratively. Last spring, poet Denise Newman and artist Lynn Marie Kirby spoke with chorus members about relationships in their lives, with a particular focus on the relationships in their lives as women.

Hege noted that the form of the piece is different from many traditional compositions — unlike many classical works, there isn't a big climactic or "arrival" moment.

"It's very episodic. And I feel like it really captures the way that there are moments in our chorus rehearsal, and



Courtesy Stan Ng

Peninsula Women's Chorus, seen here performing at Mission Santa Clara in December 2021, will perform its 2022 holiday concert, "Songs of Connection: The Ties that Bind," Dec. 10 in Palo Alto and Dec. 18 at Mission Santa Clara.

then moments with our families and then moments in our work. And there are all these different realms in which we exist, and they dovetail each other," Hege said.

"Would You Like to Have it All?" is one of two premieres on the chorus' program, which also marks the PWC debut of Karen Siegel's "Despertar," a co-commission with Consonare Choral Community, West Village Chorale and the Yale Glee Club. The chorus performed an excerpt from Siegel's piece at a concert in May. The work plays with the "fleeting and ever-changing magic of life and nature through extended vocal techniques and subtle overtone variations," according to the program notes.

Although "Songs of Connection" features new compositions, its diverse program spans almost a thousand of years of music: Hildegard von Bingen's "Caritas Abundat," which dates back to 1151, is the oldest, joined by comparatively newer works by Mendelssohn, Schubert, Vaughan Williams and Copland.

These works mingle with

a variety of contemporary music, including two pieces that examine relationships in less expected ways that Hege said helped inspire the concert's overall theme. "Pen Pals," by Pamela Z, explores a woman's evolving relationship with her pen pals and how the digital age has changed how they connect, while Amy X. Neuburg's "Before I Forget" looks at the changes over time in the relationship between parent and child.

Hege said that the array of older and new works is deliberate.

"That's one thing I love to do. I would say that my specialty is new music, but I think it's so important to put these pieces in a room together. When I think of programming, I think of these pieces living together. And there are ways that these pieces start to speak to each other through the process of rehearsing them," she said.

Hege said that better known pieces can also help bridge the gap between the familiar and the unknown for audiences, who may be hesitant to attend a concert of all new works.

Another unique element that

will tie the works together and bring a sense of continuity to the concert will be musical interludes between each piece by guest artist, flutist Rachel Beetz. Instead of periods of applause and then quiet between each piece on the program, Hege said she aims to keep the audience in a "listening space" for the concert, weaving in flute interludes.

"(Beetz) not only plays flute but she is also an accomplished electronic artist, so she often adds live processing to her flute playing. For example, she will provide an interlude as PWC walks out to surround the audience for the (von Bingen piece). And in that interlude, she'll be doing some processing and she'll build these looping drones that PWC will then sing over," Hege said.

Perhaps fittingly for its theme, "Songs of Connection" concludes with "Crowded Table" a country-inflected 2019 song by The Highwomen. The chorus features the lyric, "I want a house with a crowded table/And a place by the fire for everyone."

Hege said that she hopes audiences embrace the

program's exploration of relationships, as the holiday season highlights the ties between loved ones, and can also present challenges — but the complexities themselves are worth celebrating, too.

"I feel like there's something that especially the new repertoire in this concert gets at is the complexity of relationships. I'm really hoping that there's a way that this repertoire helps with sitting with that complexity of what it means to be in relationships with others, and the joy that's there — how it's not only joyful, but (all that it means) to be together," she said.

The Peninsula Women's Chorus presents "Songs of Connection: The Ties that Bind" concert Dec. 10, 4 p.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 600 Colorado Ave., Palo Alto and Dec. 18, 4 p.m. at Mission Santa Clara, 500 El Camino Real, Santa Clara. Tickets are \$10-\$40. pwchorus.org. ■

Email Arts & Entertainment Editor Heather Zimmerman at hzimmerman@almanacnews.com.

Music without borders

Freddy Clarke's Wobbly World performs in Menlo Park Dec. 14

By Karla Kane

How can local listeners take a voyage around the world without leaving the Peninsula? They could try a trip to the Guild Theatre on Wednesday, Dec. 14, where audiences will be treated to a globe-trotting sonic voyage from Freddy Clarke's Wobbly World, a band made up of artists originating from a diverse array of international cultures and brought together by the belief that music knows no boundaries.

At the Guild show, bandleader and guitarist Clarke will be joined by Erick Barberia, (originally from Cuba) on congas, bata and vocals; singer Yeny Valdes (also from Cuba); Georges Lammam (from Lebanon) on violin and vocals; Bouchaib Abdelhadi (from Morocco) on percussion, oud and vocals; Khader Keileh (from Palestine and Jordan) on keyboard; Arun Saigal (from India) on mridangam and vocals; Charles Moselle (U.S.) on woodwinds and vocals; Ernesto Mazar (Cuba) on bass and vocals; Erick Peralta (from Peru) on piano; Colin Douglas (U.S.) on drums; Eddy Navia (Bolivia) on charango; and Nhut Bui (Vietnam) on dan bau.

The group boasts an eclectic repertoire, with roots in Latin and Arabic traditions and a big, rich sound that defies easy description.

"I think of us as somewhat similar to Gypsy Kings meets Smashing Pumpkins," Clarke said. "We play country music, just not this country."

The band's arrangements take shape naturally, based on improvisation.

"I've never told anyone how to play. My goal is to let people be themselves and let the music find itself," Clarke said. "It's a collaborative experience." The group members compose and play original songs, too, and hope to record and release a new full-length album soon.

Intriguing life stories and musical experiences abound among the biographies of Wobbly World players, including Valdes, who was a member of the renowned Cuban band Los Van Van; Navia, who, according to Wobbly World's website, is the first Bolivian to be Grammy-nominated; and Lammam, who was raised in a Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut, has played in the national orchestra of Dubai and

whose music has been used in support of philanthropic and arts nonprofits.

Bui grew up appreciating and playing both Vietnamese music and Western songs and immigrated to the U.S. from Vietnam as a refugee. His instrument, the dan bau — or monochord — is a traditional single-string instrument that, despite having only one string, has a versatile three-octave range that Bui is able to masterfully apply to a range of genres, much to listeners' delight and surprise.

"Practically, I can do anything with it," Bui said.

Bui made a name for himself in the Bay Area music scene as

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Courtesy Freddy Clarke's Wobbly World

Freddy Clarke's Wobbly World plays The Guild Theatre on Dec. 14. The band features a large, revolving lineup of international musicians.



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MUSIC

continued from page 19

a master of the monochord, and became one of Wobbly World's first members after meeting Clarke in 2001. Though Bui is currently living in Florida, he flies back to the Bay Area to play with Wobbly World when a good gig beckons. He loves seeing the reaction of listeners responding to the group's unusual mix of rhythms and flavors.

"I think the audiences really like what we have had for them," he said. "People really love to dance along."

The band may open the Dec. 14 show with Bui playing the U.S. national anthem on the dan bau.

"He plays the 'Star Spangled Banner' a la Jimi Hendrix. People go crazy," Clarke said.

Clarke picked up the guitar as a youngster, influenced by rock bands such as The



Courtesy Freddy Clarke's Wobbly World

Nhut Bui plays the dan bau or monochord, a traditional Vietnamese single-string instrument. Sometimes he opens the show playing the "Star Spangled Banner" on the instrument.

Beatles and Hendrix (whom he got to see perform twice, he noted) and hanging out at now-legendary San Francisco venues like the Fillmore and the Avalon Ballroom. He also studied jazz and classical,

falling in love with the work of J.S. Bach. His father, a talented woodworker inspired by his son's passion for acoustic guitar, began building his own classical guitars, which have made their way around



Courtesy Elliot Karlan Photography

Bandleader and guitarist Freddy Clarke has described Wobbly World's sound as "somewhat similar to Gypsy Kings meets Smashing Pumpkins."

the world. At age 20, Clarke moved with his parents (who had recently remarried after divorcing when he was a baby) from San Francisco down to Menlo Park, where he's been based ever since.

In 1987, Clarke's rock band Boys Cry Wolf spent five weeks competing on "Star Search," but he maintained his classical interests over the years as well, and developed a particular flair for flamenco guitar.

The seeds for Wobbly World were planted around 25 years ago, when Clarke played a gig with Persian musician Mohammad Nejad, an acclaimed multi-instrumentalist. The unusual and successful fusion of their styles set Clarke on a decades-long path of connecting and collaborating with musicians from a wide variety of cultural traditions.

Locals can often catch permutations of the band at the Stanford Park and Park James hotels; they've played venues including jazz hotspot Yoshi's and at the Guild Theatre's soft opening; and while the group hasn't toured widely, one especially meaningful gig took place in 2016, when members traveled to Greece and performed at a refugee camp. "That was amazing," Clarke said.

Clarke and his bandmates see Wobbly World as a testament to the power of music to unite, regardless of (and thanks to) differences in perspective and backgrounds.

"We are a political statement without saying a word," Clarke said. "My goal with this band is to showcase an all-inclusive America that includes people of different colors, races, and nationalities. To show that we can work together in this synergistic way and create something that is more ... than each of us individually."

Wobbly World will perform Wednesday, Dec. 14, at 8 p.m. at the Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Admission is \$25-\$40. More information is available at wobblyworldmusic.com. ■

Email Contributing Writer Karla Kane at karlajkane@gmail.com.



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Learn More About Our Team!

Food & Drink

Family matters

Two sisters are behind a new Uyghur restaurant in downtown Menlo Park

By Kate Bradshaw

Almira and Kalbi Tursungjan grew up in a foodie family. In their home region of east Turkistan, the two sisters' parents ran a restaurant for decades, and the four of them would go on epic six-hour road trips to seek out specific dishes, Almira said in a recent interview.

The sisters identify as ethnic Uyghurs and have just opened Mrs. Khan in downtown Menlo Park, which they say is one of the only ethnic Uyghur restaurants in the Bay Area.

East Turkestan, also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, has been occupied by China since 1949, and the Uyghur ethnic group has been subject to extensive and ongoing human rights abuses.

Older sister Kalbi (short for Kalbinur) came to the U.S. in 2010 for college and, except for a visit in 2011, hasn't returned. Younger sister Almira came to the U.S. in 2015, which she says was a culture shock — police could just come to her family's house in Turkestan and take their belongings away, and the norm was for the government to surveil phone and social media use, she says. After college, the sisters settled in Sacramento,

where Kalbi ran a limousine business.

While visiting friends in Menlo Park, Almira says she used to peek through the windows of the former restaurant at the location — Juban Yakiniku — and imagine opening a beautiful Uyghur restaurant there.

"Menlo Park is a beautiful town," she says. "Everybody is so nice (and) polite."

When she saw the space was empty last year, she talked to her sister and they got in touch with the landlord. They were surprised when they learned they might be able to afford it.

It took some convincing to get the landlord to take a chance on two first-time restaurateurs, but eventually they landed the lease. The sisters moved to Foster City and began their venture.

"The sad part is that my family doesn't know I'm opening a restaurant," Almira says.

Today, the sisters say they and others from the region put their families at risk by getting in contact with relatives back home and may themselves face demands for their personal information by the Chinese government as a result, Kalbi says. Their parents' passports have been taken away and the

sisters aren't currently in touch with them.

The Uyghur population in the United States is estimated to be between 10,000 and 15,000 people, according to the East Turkistan Government in Exile.

"All of us are living here like orphans, to be honest," Kalbi says.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kalbi says, the Chinese repression in her home area has become even more intense, with sensors and locks installed on residents' doors as part of the country's "Zero COVID" policy.

Growing up, the sisters had different approaches when it came to cooking. Almira says she was curious about everything in the restaurant kitchen



Magali Gauthier

Sisters Almira, left, and Kalbi Tursungjan, right, in their restaurant, Mrs. Khan, in Menlo Park on Dec. 5.

and was always trying to sneak in to watch the chef cook. She would cry to her parents whenever she got kicked out.

"I loved to see how the magic happened," she says.

Kalbi, on the other hand, says she didn't know how to cook Uyghur food when she first came to the U.S. and was sad at first about her college cuisine options, which were mostly fried foods or salad. Over time, she says she picked up the craft by watching online cooking videos.

"My people — we love to eat

our food, but not everybody knows how to cook," Almira says. "I want people to have a place they can ... go out and talk with friends, talk, sit for a long time (and) have something hot."

Right now, the restaurant is in its soft-opening phase and the menu has fewer items than it will after its grand opening, likely early in the new year, Almira says.

They're working on training their staff to prepare cuisine that may be new to them and are eager to support the immigrant community as a job provider — including non-English speakers. They're also planning to bring in a new chef in the new year.

The menu includes as its starters a vermicelli salad, Uyghur salad and gosh naan, a meat and bread dish.

The main courses include a Uyghur chicken korma option; laghman, a meat, vegetable and pulled noodle dish; spicy rice noodles; spicy rice cake; polov, a rice pilaf in the Uyghur style; and stir-fry beef noodles.

The sisters note that because they are Muslim, they do not serve alcohol or pork. To accompany the meals are an assortment of sodas, plus pots of green mint tea, fruit tea or Uyghur milk tea.

And for dessert, the restaurant offers strawberry and Nutella cheesecake, each served with chocolate, vanilla or green tea ice cream.

Mrs. Khan, 712 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park; 650-752-6460. ■

Email Associate Digital Editor Kate Bradshaw at peninsulafoodist@embarcaderopublishing.com.



Magali Gauthier

Almira Tursungjan grabs a combination of spices while cooking a dish in the new Menlo Park restaurant, Mrs. Khan, on Dec. 5.



Magali Gauthier

The stir fry beef noodles at Mrs. Khan are on its main course menu.



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