

The Almanac

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

DECEMBER 30, 2022 | VOL. 58 NO. 17



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From neighborhood turkeys to housing snafus, this 12-year-old is bringing the news to North Fair Oaks

By Leah Worthington

From his high-backed, leather chair, Milo Kittock can swivel easily between his sleek, gold fountain pen, corded telephone and prized typewriter.

The typewriter is his third — he loves old things, he said, mindlessly as he scratched the head of his cat Oliver, who has sprawled across the desk, nearly knocking off the engraved nameplate that reads: Milo B. Kittock, Editor-in-Chief.

Only 12 years old, Kittock looked perfectly at ease in his 60s-era corporate office. His bedroom, betrayed only by the bed in the corner, is first and foremost a newsroom and the hub of North Fair Oaks' premiere (and only) dedicated publication: The Hamster News.

Since launching his print-only paper in January of this year, Kittock has put out dozens of issues covering

everything from inclement weather to missing vehicles to the neighborhood turkey, Petunia, who, as it turns out, is more of a Peter. Over the last year, Kittock has gained a steady following of 22 paying subscribers who, for just \$5 per year, receive the newspaper at their door, while another dozen or so snag a copy from him at a nearby street corner.

As founder, reporter, editor, designer and distributor of the bi-weekly Hamster News, Kittock has his work cut out for him. Especially because he does the whole thing without a computer.

"It usually takes me, from start to finish, like two or three days," he said.

The paper typically has four stories, including a cover feature, as well as original photography, a couple of comics and, more recently, a crossword. (He also has space for letters to



Leah Worthington

See **HAMSTER NEWS**, page 15

Hamster News editor-in-chief Milo Kittock sits behind his desk.

Year in review: Affordable housing debate, scientific advancement and COVID recovery in Menlo Park

By Cameron Rebosio

This year in Menlo Park was about a city reopening. Faced by pressure from residents to bring back community events following years of pandemic shutdown, the city has slowly brought back the citywide events that used to bring people together.

Along with reemerging from the pandemic, the city also faced significant challenges this year planning for state-mandated housing growth, which requires Menlo Park to take a hard look at where it can add housing over the next eight years. Adding a wrinkle in the local housing

debate, an unsuccessful voter initiative sought to curb what future development would be allowed in large residential swaths of the city.

Major developments

Menlo Park saw several large developments move forward in major ways this year. Early in the year, the city approved Stanford's Middle Plaza project on a 3-2 vote. The development faced controversy over the removal of parking spots in front of local businesses and the fact that city staff brought street modifications connected to the project to Caltrans

for approval before bringing them to the council. Still, the 429,739-square-foot development was ultimately approved by the City Council in March.

The council also approved Facebook's massive Willow Village development on a 59-acre site that will include offices, housing, retail and community amenities. The project is set to include a grocery store that is greatly anticipated by nearby residents, over 300 below-market-rate units and a 93-room hotel. The city and developers went back and forth for months on the make-up of a quarter-billion dollars in community amenities and the

development schedule.

While Willow Village has been approved, other major developments will be getting underway in 2023. A detailed plan for the Parkline redevelopment of SRI's campus is now in the hands the Menlo Park Planning Commission. The mixed-use office and housing development, with open space and bicycle and pedestrian lanes throughout the campus, promises a major change for the Linfield Oaks neighborhood site near Burgess Park. The United States Geological Survey's 17-acre campus at 345 Middlefield Road, also in the Linfield Oaks neighborhood,

was put up for sale but the property's constraints appeared to scare off buyers. Despite a great deal of interest, no bidders emerged. The City Council has expressed a desire to see housing built there, and up to 10 acres have been scouted for a new public middle school.

State mandates for affordable housing development dominated much of the conversation in Menlo Park in 2022, with the housing element requiring the city to plan for adding 3,800 new housing units by 2031. The draft housing element sent to the state included 69 opportunity sites

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INSIDE

OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

HELP FAMILIES IN NEED 12 | ARTS 18 | FOOD 21





Eugene

"I rely heavily on your Meals on Wheels. I don't know what I'd do without the support."

Eugene is an 85-year-old veteran and loves his independence. He became a PVI's Meals on Wheels recipient at the start of the Pandemic when his medical condition made it impossible for him to shop and cook for himself. Eugene's painful neuropathy and chronic arthritis severely impact his mobility. Managing both chronic conditions have significantly affected his lifestyle, yet Eugene describes PVI's Meals on Wheels "as a life-saver!" Not only does he enjoy the nutritious meals, he looks forward to the warm and friendly delivery drivers.

Daily Senior Impact:

1 in 6 seniors is facing hunger

1 in 3 seniors dies with Alzheimer's or another dementia

Nearly 1 in 5 spousal caregivers passes away before their loved one

1 in 4 seniors live alone and feel lonely.

50% of seniors living alone are without the finances for basic needs, transportation, or technology to access the wellness programs they need

Among PVI's Firsts:

- The first **suburban senior activity center** in the U.S. to promote health and well-being.
- The first groundbreaking initiative and **HUD grant in the U.S. for the construction of affordable senior housing.**
- The first state-of-the-art, purpose-built **licensed adult day services facility** for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias.
- One of the first **on-demand, concierge transportation services** for seniors to empower independence.

Celebrating 75 years

PVI

Enabling Seniors to Age in Place

Your impact spans PVI's 75-year history of firsts in senior services

Peninsula Volunteers, Inc. (PVI) celebrates our **75th year of enabling seniors to age in place.** We accomplished this milestone because of your significant generosity spanning our humble yet bold beginnings. **Thank you for staying by our side.**

PVI was a **leader in gerontology** at a time it was unheard of. **In 1947**, our visionary women founders built a remarkable legacy, enriching the lives of countless thousands of local seniors and their families.

The challenges are now much larger in scope

Many local seniors are struggling to stay afloat in today's uncertain environment. Current needs are far outstripping the growth of the local aging population and the gap is widening. **Widespread loneliness, social isolation, hunger, and health inequities** cut deeper into community lives. **Mounting inflationary costs** are further straining financial resources beyond sustainability and shutting our seniors out.

Join us as we transform aging

PVI will continue to **transform aging** in our local communities, changing the way seniors are cared for and treated as valuable members of society. New levels of concierge caregiver and family support services, expansion of innovative community partnerships, and extension of our local geographic reach will meet the challenges ahead for you and your family members.

You may ask, how can I make a difference right now?

You have the power to change the life of a senior today. Your gift of support is indispensable to the **thousands of local families relying on us** during the holiday season and beyond for their health and well-being. Please make your gift of an amount that is right for you* securely online and spread the word to a friend who shares your passion to help extend senior health and independence for seniors like Eugene and Helen. Visit www.1pvi.org and www.1pvi.org/donate.

**\$500 funds one month of PVI Meals on Wheels for two at-risk seniors or one annual Senior Center fitness membership.*

With hope and gratitude for PVI's next 75 years,


Peter Olson
Chief Executive Officer


Georgie Gleim
Board President



Helen



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For 75 years, Peninsula Volunteers, Inc. has enabled seniors to age in place, driven by a profound legacy of caring and our core values of respect, commitment, trust, dedication and compassion. Our four core programs serve over 6,000 households and address the most pressing issues of aging adults by offering critical services to sustain their daily physical, nutritional, emotional and mental health while achieving dignity and independence in their lives. PVI's programs include Nutrition Services/Meals on Wheels; Adult Day Services at Rosener House; Health, Wellness and Lifetime Enrichment offerings at Little House; and on-demand Transportation Services at Little House.

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53Politzer.com



For Sale - Woodside

Offered at \$6,388,000

675Manzanita.com



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Isabella Ave. Atherton



***Sold**

Offered @ \$8,250,000

Jane Drive Woodside



***Sold**

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Atherton Ave. Atherton



Sold

Offered @ \$12,500,000

Atherton Ave. Atherton



***Sold**

Offered @ \$11,000,000

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650.704.5308 Cell

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**Leah
Worthington**
LEAD REPORTER

Hear from reporter, Leah Worthington

As a new reporter to Embarcadero Media, a small local news organization on the Peninsula that covers news for the Palo Alto Weekly, the Mountain View Voice, The Almanac, and Redwood City Pulse, I could never have imagined what this year would bring.

Over the last 12 months, as a founding reporter for the Pulse, I've had the opportunity to moderate local political debates and go behind the scenes at a beloved family circus. I've spent hours uncovering the reality of homeless encampment evictions and going door-to-door to speak with neighbors affected by wildfire. Most recently, on the night of the Pulse's one-year anniversary celebration no less, a tragedy struck our community and threw me into a deeply wrenching and complex story.

On Nov. 4, a car crash took the lives of a young, local couple and the parents of two twin girls. In the aftermath of the crash, I found myself in difficult, often emotional conversations with family members, friends, law enforcement and county officials, as we tried to piece together what had happened—and what the impacts would be. The stories that have come since have touched on both our shared humanity and our political differences, as families try to heal and legal and law enforcement experts grapple with how to seek justice.

Local journalism truly runs the gamut. From heated political protests to colorful Día de los Muertos festivals to hours-long city council meetings, I'm out there with my fellow reporters, catching the action, talking to the community and reporting back on what we find.

You, our readers, are as essential in this work as anyone else. You ask critical questions, share invaluable tips and remind us what this work is really about—keeping our communities engaged and informed.

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Local News

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Magali Gauthier

Julia, left, and Samara, center, read a book together while Madison walks by in the Spanish immersion preschool at Lower Laurel School in Atherton on Dec. 6.

New Spanish immersion preschool launches in Atherton

The program is part of the Early Learning Center in the Menlo Park school district

By Angela Swartz

Just a few months into a new Spanish immersion program in the Early Learning Center, 4-year-old Emma has developed an accent in the language and is having an easier time understanding movies she watches in Spanish. Emma speaks French at home, said her father Thomas. “They pick it up so fast,” said Thomas, noting that what

really impresses him is not just the range of her vocabulary but the pronunciation. He hopes Emma can continue into Spanish immersion when she enrolls in kindergarten in the Menlo Park City School District.

Emma is one of the preschoolers enrolled in the Early Learning Center’s new Spanish immersion classroom, Colibríes, which means hummingbirds in Spanish, at Lower Laurel School

in Atherton.

The program came about because families expressed interest in a Spanish immersion program, said Early Learning Center Director Chana Stewart. The majority of the curriculum and daily routines are conducted in Spanish by native Spanish-speaking teachers.

The students, ages 3 to 5, learn

See **PRESCHOOL**, page 8

Delay in picking new Menlo Park council member irks residents and outgoing incumbent

By Cameron Rebosio

Residents and Menlo Park City Council Member Ray Mueller are pushing back against the decision to delay the appointment of a new council member to represent District 5.

Speaking at a Dec. 22 City Council meeting, Mueller said that he heard complaints from the residents he represents, and that a delayed vote — specifically one that after he steps down from the council — would leave his district without a voice on the critical decision of who will fill the remaining two years of his term.

The council is currently looking to appoint Mueller’s successor after he was elected to serve on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. Council members were set to interview the long list of applicants and potentially vote on his replacement on Dec. 21, but opted to continue the meeting. Interviews were conducted just 24 hours after the application deadline.

“Imagine a situation where I show up at night, and I just share who I think should be appointed.

That will have weight, but they can just disregard it,” Mueller said. “Imagine if this were any other district in the city? Would this be happening?”

Several residents have been voicing their concerns in emails to the City Council, saying they feel that an appointment made without a vote from Mueller would be unfair to them and ruin the district system that was created with the intent of fair representation among the town’s geographic regions.

“I fear any appointment made without Ray’s voice will be widely seen as an irresponsible, rigged, and purely political decision made with suspect motives,” resident Derek Marsano said in an email to the City Council. “In turn, a dark shadow would be cast over our new — supposedly improved — form of city governance with representation by district, in which each district supposedly receives a direct voice in its representation on the council”

Both Mueller and City Manager Justin Murphy have requested that council members hold a special meeting prior to Mueller stepping down from the Council on Jan. 1. According to Mueller, Council member Drew Combs and Mayor Jen Wolosin



Ray Mueller

See **COUNCIL MEMBER**, page 7

At local schools, 2022 brought leadership shuffles, new programs, late starts and dwindling enrollment

By Angela Swartz

Midpeninsula schools went through a year full of change as administrators stepped down and new programs were introduced.

One of the biggest changes came when Sequoia Union High School District Superintendent Darnise Williams abruptly resigned following closed-door board meetings and emotional public meetings with community members alleging that the board was trying to fire her.

With a new state law in effect, some local school districts rolled out new transitional kindergarten programs for children under age 5 while districts like Ravenswood, Portola Valley and Woodside expanded their TK offerings. The Almanac documented some of the first days of these programs.

Regionally, districts continued to see student enrollment dip as families continue to leave the area because thanks to increased flexibility from remote work and from the economic pressures of

the rising cost of living.

High school start times were pushed back because a new state law that took effect this past fall. It aims to improve students’ academic performance and mental health by more closely aligning the school day to typical teenage sleep patterns.

Most local schools saw a decline in student performance on standardized tests this year, which were administered in the spring and were the first such assessment since the pandemic and the switch to remote learning.

Menlo Park City School District Superintendent Erik Burmeister announced he would be departing the district at the end of 2022 and named district administrator Kristen Gracia as his predecessor.

In June, voters in the Ravenswood City School District approved a \$110 million bond measure to replace aging portable buildings and create preschool classrooms, among other upgrades. The district also made progress in renovating its middle school. Ravenswood officials are exploring options to lease

district-owned land to improve its financial stability and is looking to build workforce housing.

In November, community members wondered why, on two separate occasions, students brought loaded guns to Menlo-Atherton High School’s campus. Woodside High School faced a lockdown, which turned out to be a false “swatting” call that brought San Mateo County Sheriff’s deputies to the campus to investigate. ■

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO ADOPT AN ORDINANCE OF THE WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING AN ADMINISTRATIVE CITATION PROGRAM. BY REFERENCE, THE 2018 INTERNATIONAL FIRE CODE WITH THE 2019 CALIFORNIA AND LOCAL AMENDMENTS INCLUDING ALL ADOPTED STANDARD AS SPECIFIED PRESCRIBING REGULATIONS GOVERNING CONDITIONS HAZARDOUS TO LIFE AND PROPERTY FROM FIRE OR EXPLOSION WITHIN THE TERRITORY OF THE WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT, ESTABLISHING A BUREAU OF FIRE PREVENTION AND PROVIDING OFFICERS THEREFORE AND DEFINING THEIR POWERS AND DUTIES.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Board of Directors of the Woodside Fire Protection District County of San Mateo, State of California, pursuant to California Government Code section 53069.4 and California Health and Safety Code Sections 13861{h} and {i} will adopt an Ordinance of the Woodside Fire Protection District of San Mateo County, California, adopting an Administrative Citation Program.

FURTHER NOTICE HEREBY GIVEN that the following such public hearing, the Board of Directors of the District intends to enact all, or part of said ordinance; and

FURTHER NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that copies of the 2022-01 Administrative Citation adopting Ordinance, are on file with the Secretary of the Board of the District and are open to public inspection at 808 Portola Rd., Portola Valley, California 94028.

Secretary of the Board
Woodside Fire Protection District



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

NOTICE OF PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the Town of Portola Valley will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, January 4, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. via hybrid format at the Historic Schoolhouse, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley and Zoom.**

The Planning Commission will consider a recommendation to the Town Council regarding amendments to the Housing Element of the General Plan and associated actions as follows:

- **Portola Valley Housing and Safety Elements Update and Conforming General Plan and Zoning Code Amendments Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration**
- **Housing Element Update (2023-2031)**
- **Conforming General Plan Amendments** 1) Creation of a new "Gateway" land use classification that allows affordable housing, recreation, and open space uses to be applied to two parcels. 2) Creation of two new multi-family land use classifications allowing up to four and 20 dwelling units per acre. 3) Creation of an opt-in overlay classification to allow for a up to four units on approximately three single family lots (not to exceed a total of 12 units during the new housing element cycle). 4) Creation of a new mixed-use land use classification to allow for up to six dwelling units per acre as well as the uses currently permitted in the existing A-P Administrative Professional District. The Land Use Element, Alpine Scenic Corridor Plan and Nathhorst Triangle Plan, the General Plan Land Use Map and the Nathhorst Triangle Plan diagram would be revised to include these new land use designations.
- **Implementing Zoning Amendments** Creation of three new zoning districts including, 1) a new multi-family district allowing up to four dwelling units per acre; 2) a new multi-family district allowing 20 dwelling units per acre; and 3) a mixed-use district allowing residential uses up to six dwelling units per acre. Codification of the Affiliated Housing program that is currently implemented through the Housing Element. The zoning map would also be revised to reflect these new districts.

Information pertaining to these actions may be viewed by contacting Thomas Geisler, Development Review Technician, at tgeisler@portolavalley.net. The agenda and staff report will be published at <https://www.portolavalley.net/town-government/planning-commission/minutes-and-agendas> in advance of the meeting.

Public Hearings provide the general public and interested parties an opportunity to provide testimony on these items. All interested persons are invited to appear before the Planning Commission to be heard at the time and place mentioned above. If you challenge a proposed action(s) in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at a Public Hearing(s) described above, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at, or prior to, the Public Hearing(s). Public Comments should be directed to housing@portolavalley.net.

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Laura Russell, Planning & Building Director

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Editor
Andrea Gemmet (223-6537)

Assistant Editor
Kevin Forestieri (223-6535)

Arts & Entertainment Editor
Heather Zimmerman (223-6515)

Staff Writers
Cameron Rebosio (223-6536),
Angela Swartz (223-6529)

Embarcadero Media Staff Writers
Sue Dremann (223-6518), Malea Martin
(223-6516), Zoe Morgan (223-6519),
Gennady Sheyner (223-6513),
Leah Worthington (223-6533)

Editorial Intern Emily Margaretten

Contributors Kate Daly, Maggie Mah

Special Sections Editor
Linda Taaffe (223-6511)

Chief Visual Journalist
Magali Gauthier (223-6530)

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Design and Production Manager
Kristin Brown (223-6562)

Designers
Linda Atilano, Kevin Legnon, Paul
Llewellyn, Mary Watanabe, Doug Young

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Vice President and Chief Revenue Officer
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The Almanac is published
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**3525 Alameda De Las Pulgas,
Menlo Park, CA 94025**

■ **Newsroom:** (650) 223-6525
Newsroom Fax: (650) 223-7525

■ **Email news** and photos with captions
to: Editor@AlmanacNews.com

■ **Email letters** to:
Letters@AlmanacNews.com

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CRIME BRIEFS

Illegally possessed guns seized in Menlo Park bust

Menlo Park police officers and San Mateo County District Attorney gun violence detectives said they seized numerous guns, including a prohibited AR15 assault weapon, from a resident who has been prohibited from possessing guns since 2015.

On Dec. 21, police issued a search warrant on suspicion of a prohibited person possessing firearms in the 1300 block of Hamilton Avenue in Menlo Park.

Detectives said they seized an unregistered AR15 assault weapon, two handguns, multiple high-capacity magazines, hundreds of rounds of ammunition.

Police arrested Kristian Arnaldo Arguello, who was previously prohibited from possessing guns and ammunition because of a criminal conviction, and booked him into the San Mateo County Jail.

The investigation was a collaboration between the Menlo Park Police Department and the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office Gun Violence Prevention Program.

Teen in fatal street racing crash ordered to stay in juvenile hall

A teenage driver arrested and charged following an alleged street racing crash that killed a husband and wife in Redwood City last month was ordered to stay in juvenile hall following a court hearing Dec. 20, in which the teen's attorney sought to have him released, prosecutors said.

The 17-year-old boy, whose name is not being released because he is a juvenile, is accused of racing 23-year-old Kyle Harrison on El Camino Real on the night of Nov. 4, leading to a crash that killed Palo Alto natives Gregory Ammen and Grace Spiridon, who were in a vehicle with their twin 7-year-old girls, according to the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office.

At the hearing, the teen's attorney asked for his release, while Ammen's brother asked that the teen continue being detained. Judge Susan Etezadi ordered that he stay in custody pending further juvenile court proceedings, prosecutors said.

The District Attorney's Office alleges that the 17-year-old and Harrison did not know each other but were at a stop light and communicated between their two vehicles to race, then took off at speeds of 80 to 90 mph when the light turned green.

Ammen and Spiridon were turning left onto El Camino Real from Finger Avenue when the teen's car struck it. The husband and wife died at the scene but their two young girls survived. The 17-year-old and two passengers in his car were also taken to a hospital, while Harrison allegedly fled but was found more than two weeks later thanks to a witness who took a photo of his license plate, prosecutors said.

Harrison remains in custody under no bail status with a preliminary hearing set for Jan. 27. The 17-year-old is set to return to juvenile court on Feb. 28.

A GoFundMe account created for the daughters of the couple killed in the crash gathered more than \$554,000 as of Dec. 21.

The account, created by Spiridon's sister, says the couple "were outstanding people and lights of love, support and inspiration to countless friends, family, co-workers and their community."

The account says, "The girls, sadly, will need a lifetime of support and love from Grace & Greg's community. These funds will be used towards their immediate and future care."

Bay City News Service

The Almanac
Holiday Fund 2022

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Portola Valley in 2022: Battles over housing and a contentious election roils the town

By Angela Swartz

Housing development again was center stage in Portola Valley in 2022, as the state deadline for a compliant housing plan looms over the start of the new year.

Nathhorst Triangle residents filed a massive public records request with the town after they were concerned about the potential for a multifamily housing development in their neighborhood. The town also settled a lawsuit alleging Brown Act violations over text messages between town staff and advisory committee members, saying it was necessary to save the town the cost of

expensive litigation.

A vitriolic election led to Town Council member Craig Hughes losing his reelection bid in November. A PAC raised \$40,000 to unseat incumbent council members, only one of whom chose to run. Planning Commissioners Judith Hasko and Craig Taylor were early winners to seats on the council, while retired doctor Mary Hufty emerged victorious after being neck-and-neck with Hughes in early election returns.

There was a controversy over a candidate forum billed as only being open to Portola Valley residents, which an Almanac reporter attended

with the support of some community members. The Almanac also hosted its first online candidates forum with participation from all five council candidates.

Jeff Aalfs stepped into the mayor role in December, while Sarah Wernikoff opted out of her turn to hold the honorary position, preferring to stay in the vice mayor role due of family responsibilities. The council said goodbye to Hughes, Maryann Derwin and John Richards, saluting them for a combined 50 years of volunteer service to the town. ■

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.



Cameron Rebosio

Signs read "Private Meeting Portola Valley Residents Only" at a Town Council candidates forum in the Town Center on Oct. 13.

Menlo Park Council delays decision to appoint a new member

Eleven people are seeking to represent District 5 for two years

By Cameron Rebosio

The Menlo Park City Council did not appoint a new District 5 council member as expected Wednesday, Dec. 21. Eleven applicants are seeking to fill the rest of Ray Mueller's term after he steps down to take his new role as a county supervisor in January.

Instead, after interviewing the majority of the applicants, the meeting was continued to Monday, Jan. 9, at 5 p.m.

Following Mueller's election to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors in November, the City Council chose to appoint a new member rather than hold a special election. The new member must be a resident of District 5, which encompasses Sharon Heights, Sandhill and parts of West Menlo Park.

Those interested in serving

had until 5 p.m. on Dec. 20 to submit an application to the city, a little over 24 hours before the council was scheduled to decide on an appointee at the special meeting Dec. 21.

At that meeting, nine of the 11 applicants answered questions from the council about their qualifications, local political decisions that they did and did not agree with, and their understanding of the Brown Act, the state's open meeting law that guarantees public access to local government meetings. Two of the eleven candidates were unavailable during their assigned interview slots. Another three people who had applied withdrew themselves from consideration prior to the meeting.

A majority of council members — Drew Combs, Cecilia Taylor and Betsy Nash — said

that they did not have enough time to make an educated decision, and wanted to continue the meeting.

The new member is expected to be appointed in time for the council's vote on the city's housing element, a state-mandated plan for increasing housing development over the next eight years, which must be finalized and resubmitted by Jan. 31.

"The main levers as it relates to the housing element are already in place and are not changing," Combs said. "So that horse has left the barn some time ago."

He said those "main levers" are opportunity sites for new housing and zoning changes, which are not expected to change. ■

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

COUNCIL MEMBER

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have given dates when they are available, while Council member Betsy Nash and Vice Mayor Cecilia Taylor have said that they are unavailable for any special meetings.

"I find it that it's incredibly troubling that the availability... of council members who don't represent the district is trumping whether or not the district

has a representative in the meeting," Mueller said.

Nash and Taylor were not available for comment on Mueller's statement by The Almanac's press deadline.

The meeting to appoint a District 5 council member is currently scheduled for Jan. 9 at 5 p.m. ■

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

LEHUA GREENMAN



"No one can go back in time to change what has happened. So work on your present to make yourself a wonderful future."

Happy New Year!

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Atherton's year in review: Buried car, housing woes and a missing Batmobile

By Angela Swartz

Planning to build more housing — possibly multifamily housing — dominated the conversation in Atherton in 2022, with many residents asking town officials to stick to its history of single-family home neighborhoods. Under pressure from the state to accommodate new homes, some residents asked the town to fight California's housing mandates. Meanwhile, the town began receiving applications to build duplexes under a new state law that allows single-family home owners to split their lots.

The Dirt also recently broke the news that Golden State Warriors star Steph

Curry and Atherton resident had sold his house and moved to a new Atherton neighborhood.

In October, the community was shocked by a strange discovery by landscapers: a car, loaded with bags of cement, buried in a backyard of a home in Atherton. Dogs picked up on the scent of human remains in the Mercedes Benz convertible, which had been reported stolen in the 1990s by a previous owner of the home, but no remains were found. The San Mateo Crime Lab has been analyzing parts of the vehicle for DNA to see if there is a connection to any other crimes. The previous homeowner had a criminal past that included murder convictions.

In local politics, Stacy Miles Holland was elected to the City Council in November, and council members Bill Widmer and Rick DeGolia both won reelection. Widmer took the reins as mayor in December and Diana Hawkins-Manulian stepped into the vice mayor role.

With the new Town Center complete this year, council meetings returned to in-person, though still in a hybrid format.

Atherton made national news when the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office raided the shop of an Indiana Batmobile-maker, who was accused of theft by an Atherton resident after the \$210,000 1960s-era replica Batmobile that he



Angela Swartz

A home on the 300 block of Stockbridge Avenue in Atherton where a buried car was found in the yard on Oct. 20, while excavation work was being done.

ordered was delayed.

Amid a string of residential burglaries in town, an Atherton couple that was victimized opened up to The Almanac about the emotional

damage, along with \$1 million in physical damage to their home, caused by burglars. ■

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

TOWN OF WOODSIDE
2955 WOODSIDE ROAD, WOODSIDE, CA 94062

PLANNING COMMISSION
JANUARY 11, 2023 6:00 PM

PURSUANT TO WOODSIDE TOWN RESOLUTION NO. 2022 – 7534, PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS WILL BE HELD AS HYBRID MEETINGS WITH THE OPTION TO ATTEND BY TELECONFERENCE/VIDEO CONFERENCE OR IN PERSON. MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC THAT WISH TO ATTEND AND/OR PARTICIPATE IN A MEETING MAY DO SO IN PERSON OR BY JOINING THE ZOOM MEETING [HTTPS://US02WEB.ZOOM.US/J/86068472736](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86068472736) PUBLIC COMMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED BOTH IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM MEETING. ANY EMAILS SENT TO SHARPER@WOODSIDETOWN.ORG WILL BE PROVIDED TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION PRIOR TO THE MEETING. IN THE EVENT THAT ANY MEMBER OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION PARTICIPATES IN A MEETING BY TELECONFERENCE OR VIDEO CONFERENCE, PURSUANT TO THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT, GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 54953, ALL VOTES OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION SHALL BE BY ROLL CALL.

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

Email: sharper@woodsidetown.org

PUBLIC HEARING

1. 3154 Woodside Road ASRB2022-0032; CUSE2018-0002

Woodside Village Church

Planner: Sage Schaan, Interim Planning Director

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of Design Review and a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) amendment to create a Sign Program for the Village Church, including the nursery and Village Hub; and, to update the operational conditions of the CUP. The overall project also includes a detached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) to be used as living unit for the Church grounds caretaker (sexton).

The project is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301, which includes minor alterations to existing facilities; Section 15303(e), which includes accessory structures; and, Section 15311, which provides exemptions for the minor structures such as on-premise signs.

This project was continued from the December 14, 2022, Planning Commission meeting due to lack of a quorum.

2. 340 Jane Drive

XSET2022-0002; PCDR2022-0002

Kendra Rosenburg, KNR Design Studio Planner; Melanie Olson, Assistant Planner

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of a proposal, requiring Planning Commission Design Review (PCDR2022-0002) to construct a new attached 3-car garage to an existing single-family residence within the minimum required 50-foot side setbacks, which requires a setback exception (XSET2022-0002).

The project is Categorically Exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to §15301(e), which includes additions to existing structures.

THE APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW BY CONTACTING MELANIE OLSON AT MOLSON@WOODSIDETOWN.ORG. OR SAGE SCHAAN AT SSCHAAN@WOODSIDETOWN.ORG

Community college district seeking applicants for board vacancy

By Angela Swartz

With board member Maurice Goodman newly sworn into the Millbrae City Council, the San Mateo County Community College District needs to fill his vacated seat by mid-February for Trustee Area District 3.

On Dec. 20, the board voted to make a provisional appointment rather than holding a special election to fill the vacancy created by Goodman's resignation on Dec. 13, according to a district press release. Area 3 covers the San Bruno, Hillsborough, Millbrae and Burlingame region

of the district, which stretches from Daly City to Redwood City and down the coast.

The board will discuss and approve the timeline at a special meeting set for Tuesday, Jan. 10. Applications will become available in January.

Select applicants will be interviewed at a special meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 8. The board plans to appoint the new member and administer the oath of office at the following meeting.

The appointee would hold office until the next governing board election in November 2024. ■

PRESCHOOL

continued from page 5

about different Spanish-speaking cultures and the class is a mix of native speakers and language learners. The school strives to enroll a balance of Spanish-speaking children and children who don't yet speak Spanish. There is a lead teacher and an aide for the 16 children.

When they're ready to start kindergarten, Colibris students can enter the lottery to attend the Spanish immersion programs at Laurel and Encinal schools in the district.

There are three Early Learning Center (ELC) classrooms at Laurel School and two at Oak Knoll School. The program was recently recognized with a California School Boards Association Golden Bell Award,

which recognizes outstanding programs in public education. The ELC was the only early learning program so recognized in the state, according to the district.

Lead teacher Cecy Cruz, who has worked at ELC since 2019, previously worked in the Ravenswood School District and The Institute of Human and Social Development.

Since Spanish is her first language, she feels very comfortable in the classroom, she said.

More information about the program is at ELC's website, tinyurl.com/elcspanish. Applications are open for the 2023-24 school year. Children must be 3 years old by Sept. 1, 2023 and fully potty-trained by the first day of school. ■

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

Two Woodside council members temporarily sit out housing element talks

Goeld and Brown rejoin discussion after sites near their homes were removed from the plan

By Angela Swartz

Woodside Town Council members Dick Brown and Paul Goeld announced that they would not be taking part in the town's state-mandated housing element process, citing conflicts of interest, at a Dec. 13 Town Council meeting. In neighboring Portola Valley, Council member Judith Hasko also recused herself from housing element discussions due to a potential conflict of interest.

The Woodside council's main task for the evening was to discuss and make changes to its proposed housing element draft for 2023-31, which was amended by town consultants Baker Tilly, and Dyett & Bhatia in an effort to comply with state requirements. The consultants are rushing to respond to feedback from the state's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

Town Attorney Jean Savaree said that Brown was following the lead of a Union City Vice Mayor Jaime Patiño who has recused himself from taking part in that city's housing element process. Patiño's recusal was due to advice from a Sept. 22 letter from state's Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), which said that living within 500 feet of a property being considered for development represents a conflict of interest. The FPPC said it would be reasonable to assume the council member would be impacted financially by new development near his home, the commission told

Union City's City Attorney Kristopher J. Kokotaylo in the letter.

Brown lives within 500 feet of a town-owned High Road site, which the council ultimately decided to remove from the element at the meeting, meaning Brown can take part in future housing element discussions unless the site is added back in, according to Mayor Chris Shaw.

Brown was initially joined in his recusal by newly-sworn in Council member Paul Goeld, who lives within 500 feet of one of the town-owned sites, Barkley Fields on Farm Hill Road, being considered for housing. During the beginning of the discussion, the council opted to remove the site from the inventory, as many community members have said they want the park to remain open space, and Goeld returned to take part in the conversation.

Savaree said that the recusal means the council member is required to leave the room during the discussion. They can come back and speak as a member of the public, then leave after they've made their comment.

Hasko of Portola Valley reached out to the FPPC and said she is awaiting word back, likely in early 2023, as to whether she needs to continue to sit out of Portola Valley's housing element decisions because she lives within 1,000 feet of two sites on Alpine Road being considered for upzoning.

With the addition of a vacant lot inventory of 106 vacant single family parcels and

46 non-vacant single family parcels, the Woodside Town Council felt comfortable dropping higher density projects from the plan during the meeting. Overall, the town is tasked with planning for 328 units over the next eight years.

SB 9 units nixed

Consultants removed 16 homes, which the town said it could generate through Senate Bill 9, a law that took effect in January that allows single family properties to be split and for up to four units to be built between the two lots. They said that since no one has applied for a lot split in town, it's unlikely that the state will accept that the town can produce housing through this mechanism.

"SB 9 is relatively new," said Patrick O'Keefe, the consultant in charge of the housing element. "There's cities who have not had a lot of experience with actually processing lot splits. ... HCD said 'show us your experience to justify putting these units in' and we weren't able to do that and since Dyett & Bhatia was able to come up with other sites to satisfy the RHNA requirement, we just dropped it out."

Concerns about concentration of density

Consultants opted to add 17 units, for a total of 27 units, at 773 Cañada Road. They also increased the number of units that could go in at Runnymede Road from 10 to 16. There are also still 75 proposed units of



Embarcadero Media file photo

Woodside officials are in the midst of figuring out where to designate new housing development in town.

housing in the plan at Cañada College at 4200 Farm Hill Road.

Council member Brian Dombkowski was concerned about the amount of density proposed in that part of town. He also noted that the units labeled as being on Runnymede are really on Raymundo Drive.

"I just find the level of concentration to be a little bit troubling," he said. "It's all going into Council member Goeld's and in my district, basically. And it's a lot to ask of one area of town. So I guess the question is, (is) HCD OK with concentrated geographic density or would they like it to be a little bit more spread out?"

O'Keefe said units are proposed throughout town but did acknowledge multi-family housing development is concentrated in that area of town.

The council opted to remove the 16 units at Runnymede because of concerns about earthquake and fire danger in the area.

The council removed the town-owned High Road site, with 11 units, from the plan.

"They (the sites) all have big issues," said Goeld. "I don't care whether it's Raymundo or

High Road or Cañada or whatever, they all have problems, and when residents are coming up and literally in tears talking about the impact that this is having on their lives, you've got a feel for them. ... The sum of these sites are just horrible, whether it's a sewer issue or whether it's the geography of it, or the traffic issues, or whatever it happens to be ... there is no ideal spot here, and we have to live with it."

Mayor Pro Tem Jenn Wall said she is skeptical that the town is going to be able to find additional sites for high-density development, but welcomed the chance for consultants to come up with more palatable replacements.

Questions about 'builder's remedy'

Council members asked if the town would be at risk of the so-called "builder's remedy," which allows for residential projects to move forward even if they do not comply with local development standards, if it doesn't have a compliant housing element by Jan. 31.

See **HOUSING ELEMENT**, page 16



Embarcadero Media file photo

In early 2022, Woodside put an indefinite hold on all housing projects under California's new split-lot law, citing a clause that exempts building in a mountain lion habitat.

Mountain lions and housing took center stage in Woodside in 2022

By Angela Swartz

Woodside made national news in February when it declared itself a mountain lion habitat in an effort to impede a new state law that allows single-family homeowners to split their lots in half and build duplexes. The resulting scrutiny brought threats from the state attorney general's office and backpedaling by the Town Council and town staff.

The Edgewood Fire charred 20 acres in the Emerald Hills, threatening homes and leading residents to evacuate in June. The same week, the Antiques Roadshow visited the grounds of Woodside's Filoli estate to film an episode that will air on Jan. 2.

Brian Dombkowski was reelected to the Woodside Town Council in November, beating out lifelong resident Steve Lubin and newcomer Elizabeth Kaske.

The council selected Chris Shaw as Woodside's mayor for 2023, while it said goodbye to Sean Scott, whose council seat will not be on the ballot until 2024 due to redistricting. The council is in the midst of transitioning from seven to five members — it currently has six members. Jenn Wall was chosen to serve as mayor pro tem. ■

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

Bill Widmer will serve as Atherton's mayor in 2023

Diana Hawkins-Manuelian was selected as vice mayor

By Angela Swartz

The Atherton City Council's 2023 leadership is taking shape, with the vice mayor stepping into the role as mayor and one of the newest council members tapped to become the vice mayor at a Dec. 21 meeting.

Outgoing Mayor Rick DeGolia nominated Bill a to serve as the next mayor and the council unanimously elected him to the role. Widmer then nominated Diana Hawkins-Manuelian, who joined the council in 2020, for vice mayor, which was also supported by the council.

The council swore in DeGolia, Widmer and newcomer Stacy Miles Holland, who were all elected to the council in November. DeGolia received the most support in the election, with 31.4% of votes, followed by Widmer at 29.2% and Miles Holland at 21.5%, according to certified election results. Miles Holland served as chair of the Environmental Programs Committee before joining the council.

This will be Widmer's third time as mayor since he joined the council in 2010. A former professor at Menlo College, he has lived in Atherton since 1996. Widmer



Courtesy town of Atherton

Diana Hawkins-Manuelian, left, is sworn in as vice mayor of Atherton, while Bill Widmer is sworn in as the town's mayor on Dec. 21.

was also formerly a business executive for 30 years.

Hawkins-Manuelian has lived in Atherton for about 30 years. She served on the Environmental Programs Committee, where she pursued her passion for environmental advocacy. She holds a doctorate from Harvard University Graduate School of Education, a postdoctoral degree from MIT, and has professional consulting experience with companies like NBC, MTV, and Citibank.

One of the first items of business for Widmer was to appointment Council members Elizabeth Lewis and DeGolia to serve on the City Council Ad Hoc Committee to develop a

plan for celebrating the town's centennial in 2023. The town is surveying residents to gather input on how to celebrate the anniversary.

Outgoing member honored

The council honored outgoing council member Bob Polito for his service on the council with a plaque. Polito served on the council for 14 months, stepping in for Mike Lempres who moved to Paris in fall 2021. Polito had served on the town audit and finance committee member for over eight years before being appointed to complete the remainder of Lempres' term on the council.

DeGolia said Polito brought "discipline" and a "perspective" to the council. DeGolia also complimented Polito for his integrity by keeping his promise not to run for council this fall. DeGolia explained that the council doesn't like appointed members to run in the next election since they have the unfair advantage of incumbent status without having run in a prior election.

Polito said he felt "a little guilty leaving you guys with this housing element," referring to the town's new state housing requirement for the town to accommodate at least 348 new housing units over the next eight years.

On the council, Polito advocated for trying to find compromises in the housing element and noted that he doesn't think the state will approve its housing element if it doesn't include some multifamily units in its plan.

Outgoing mayor on 2022 accomplishments, challenges

DeGolia, who served as mayor in 2021 and 2022, offered closing remarks, calling 2022 a "highly unusual year" not only because of the ongoing COVID-19 because of the unique challenge of trying

to satisfy state-mandated housing goals. The town also opened its new Town Center after taking eight years to design and build the center, following three failed attempts over the prior 20 years to raise the funding, he said.

"When I began this year I spoke about how service on this council is the most time-consuming volunteer work that I've ever done," he said. "It has been a genuine pleasure to serve with my fellow council members because we have been so extremely collaborative, and to work closely with (City Manager) George Rodericks and his excellent team. I am proud of all that we have accomplished."

He said that the new library received LEED Gold certification and various parts of the town center project have been entered in several architectural award contests.

He's also proud that the town has continued to prioritize the safety of Atherton residents and expanded the use of automated license plate readers.

When Caltrain closed the Atherton train station in 2020, the town required that the transit agency agree to design and install quad gates on Watkins Avenue. The design process is now complete and Caltrain has committed to completing the construction in 2023, he said. ■

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

Santa Clara County looks to spark more campus housing for Stanford staff

By Gennady Sheyner

Despite objections from Stanford University, Santa Clara County officials are advancing a new policy that would tie future growth of academic facilities to construction of housing for staff and faculty on the university's campus.

The new housing policy is among the most ambitious and contentious changes that the county is looking to adopt as part of its ongoing update of the Stanford Community Plan, a planning document that the county first adopted in 2000 to govern the university's growth. It would build on the existing "linkage" policy, which requires Stanford to build housing concurrently with academic expansion. But unlike the existing policy, the new one focuses future residential growth on sites inside the campus.

While Stanford does not have any major growth applications pending, the updated Stanford Community Plan aims to address many of the issues that county officials and consultants grappled with during their review of the university's last

expansion plan. The university applied in 2016 for a new general use permit that would have allowed up to 3.5 million square feet of new development. It withdrew its application in 2019 after failing to reach a consensus with the county on a development agreement and on new requirements for growth.

By updating its Stanford Community Plan, the county is signaling that the issues that had dominated the university's last growth plan — namely, housing, traffic and open space protections — would be central to any future expansion proposal. The revised housing section includes a policy that forces Stanford to build all of its required housing on or next to its campus. It further specifies that at least 70% of housing would be on campus and at most 30% can be off campus in Palo Alto and other jurisdictions contiguous to the university.

Stanford has criticized the proposed requirement and requested more flexibility when it comes to residential construction. Erin Efner, Stanford's associate vice president for land use and environmental planning,

argued in a Dec. 12 letter to the county that the measure requiring housing on campus "precludes future creative housing solutions and partnerships."

"This measure would prohibit Stanford from building required housing near transit in nearby jurisdictions where demonstrated demand exists," Efner wrote. "Allowing required housing in transit-oriented areas could minimize transportation impacts and create needed housing throughout the greater community."

The argument failed, however, to sway the members of the county Board of Supervisors, which voted on Dec. 13 to approve the new housing requirement as part of a suite of new policies that will be evaluated in the environmental analysis for the Stanford Community Plan update. Supervisors are expected to formally approve these policies once the environmental review is completed and the new Stanford Community Plan returns to the Planning Commission and the board for adoption in 2023.

The board's unanimous vote also signaled its endorsement

of two other changes that are included in the update. One relates to traffic impacts. While Stanford University will remain bound by a "no net new trips" requirement that has been in place since 2000, the updated plan will change how the traffic impacts are measured. Rather than be focused on one peak hour in the morning and one in the evening, as they are today, traffic counts will now be based on two three-hour periods. And for the first time, reverse commutes will be included in the tally.

The other big change relates to open space. Stanford is currently obligated to contain its growth to a 1,724-acre area inside what's known as the "academic growth boundary (AGB)," which includes its campus and explicitly excludes open space areas. To focus growth away from open spaces, the existing plan requires Stanford to obtain approval from four of five supervisors for any such growth proposal. That requirement, however, was adopted in 2000 for a period of 25 years. The updated plan would extend it for another 99.

Stanford has protested the new policy. At the Dec. 13 meeting, Efner cited the societal changes that have occurred over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic and suggested that the county maintain its 25-year horizon for development within academic growth boundary.

"Planning horizons extending beyond 25 years, especially as they relate to the academic growth boundary, don't reflect the rapidly changing world and also don't reflect the careful guardianship that we displayed over our land for over 130 years," Efner said.

While the university has asserted that it has no plans to propose development in existing open spaces, its assurances did not convince open space advocates and county supervisors. Many pointed to the 2018 study that the county commissioned to explore how much potential Stanford has for growth within the academic growth boundary. The study concluded that Stanford can triple its density and build about 200,000 square feet of new development per

See **STANFORD**, page 16

Its future on the line, Pioneer Seafoods is forced out of Redwood City port

By Kate Bradshaw

The Pioneer, a 76-foot-long seafaring trawler, has left its dock in Redwood City and relocated to Richmond after its permit was terminated by the Port of Redwood City. The boat was where Pioneer Seafoods' owner, Giuseppe Pennisi, sold his fresh-caught fish directly to customers, an enterprise that is now in jeopardy, he says.

Set to replace Pioneer Seafoods is a new commercial fishing tenant that will come to the port in the next few weeks to start selling fish, says Kristine Zortman, executive director of the Port of Redwood City. Meanwhile, the food truck at the port, The Blue Fish Kitchen, will continue to operate. People should check Yelp for hours as they can vary, she says.

Pioneer Seafoods' ship had operated in the Redwood City port under a pilot program with a month-to-month permit, Zortman said in an email.

"Pioneer Seafoods has not sold fish since February 2022 and was no longer providing a public benefit," Zortman said. The port was "not given a definitive reason as to why Pioneer discontinued selling fish," she said, adding that Pioneer Seafoods is still allowed to sell fish at the port as a "transient vessel" if it alerts the port about its plans 48 hours in advance and documents that it meets the regulatory requirements.

The reason he hasn't been

fishing, says Pennisi, is that he has been injured and is dealing with complicated hernia problems.

"I was just told, basically, if you don't get fishing, you're going to get kicked out of here," Pennisi said in an interview with the Peninsula Foodist. He says he was given three weeks to move his ship and other gear from the premises and is currently docked at Sugar Dock in Richmond, where fish sales are not permitted.

As owner of Pioneer Seafoods, he explains, he's not just the captain of the boat, but he's a part of the crew and is pretty much "always in the middle of everything," from lifting boxes of fish to dragging heavy equipment across the deck.

"I do the worst and hardest stuff all the time," he says. That's work that's hard to do with an ongoing injury, he adds.

But even when things were flowing smoothly with the fishing operation in Redwood City, there was a lot to juggle. Ever since he began selling fish directly to Midpeninsula customers and selling fish and chips and other seafood out of a food truck at the port in August 2020, the resident of Chico would aim to log about three fishing trips a month, each lasting four to five days. Factor in weather variability, fuel costs and stiff regulations, including having to pay for and travel with a federal observer on board, margins

were narrow and the work was physically demanding and dangerous.

"I don't think a lot of people realized how stressful that was," he says.

The Bay Area's commercial fishing community has largely disappeared in his lifetime, he says — there used to be more than 50 boats and now he has one of the only ones.

"My whole life I've been pushed from one harbor to the next," he says.

He started his fishing career in Monterey as a third-generation fisherman. Overcoming one obstacle after another, he took his business to Moss Landing, then San Francisco, where he says it took him five years to get the permits to be able to fish there. "The sad thing is, there's nobody else," he says. "It's not like I can pass this knowledge on to anyone."

While operating at the Port of Redwood City, he would fish between Monterey Bay and the Farallon Islands, 20 to 40 miles offshore. Among the fish species caught are rockfish, sole and sablefish.

"I'm just working my way up the coast, trying to find a home," he says. "I really liked Redwood City, but it's really hard to try to bring something back to life all the time."

In Redwood City, he says, he took a number of extra steps to make sure the business would be feasible. He installed walk-in freezers for his boat, helped to pay for pilings and arranged to bring in live music to draw visitors to



Courtesy Giuseppe Pennisi via Facebook

Giuseppe Pennisi is still accruing costs related to docking the Pioneer in Richmond, even though he's currently unable to fish.

the port.

"That port was dead for 35 years," he says. "I didn't understand the urgency to get rid of me."

Another part of his mission as a fisherman is to connect locals to more environmentally-friendly seafood offerings. They are able to minimize transportation emissions by offering locally caught fish — currently only a minority of fish eaten in the U.S. is actually caught here. They also use fishing techniques that minimize "bycatch," the unwanted fish that are caught during commercial fishing expeditions. The trawling gear at Pioneer Seafoods has been modified to significantly reduce bycatch, according to its website.

"It's not fair to the public that they can't have fresh local fish from their own backyard," Pennisi says.

Since posting about leaving the Port of Redwood City

on Facebook, there's been an outpouring of support for Pennisi, along with expressions of sadness and surprise at the news Pioneer Seafoods was leaving Redwood City.

He's been making calls all over the region to try to find a new location where he can sell his fish, but at 58, he is also growing tired of starting over. This year, he's been spending more time working with his sons in Chico at their company, Pioneer Engineering & Construction, but the bills keep stacking up, he says.

"I've been looking at the last 20 years of my life, and I can't say that it was worth it," he says. "I don't know how this story's going to end." ■

Redwood City Pulse reporter Leah Worthington contributed to this report.

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

Judge places FTX founder Samuel Bankman-Fried under house arrest at parents' Stanford home

Joseph Bankman, Barbara Fried post their residence as collateral for son's \$250 million bond

By Sue Dremann

Samuel Bankman-Fried, the founder of cryptocurrency exchange company FTX, will remain confined to his parents' Stanford home as a condition of his bail arrangement, according to court documents filed on Thursday, Dec. 22, in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Bankman-Fried was released from custody on a \$250 million bond, which his parents, Alan Joseph Bankman and Barbara Fried, arranged using their home as collateral, according to federal documents.

Under the terms of the court order, he must remain confined to his parents' home, will be monitored electronically and must have a mental health evaluation and adhere to any treatment. He can't open any new lines of credit, start any new businesses or enter into financial transactions greater than \$1,000, according to the order, with the exception of paying for legal costs and fees. His equity interest in his parents' home is to be provided to the court by Jan. 12.

FTX Trading Ltd., the company Bankman-Fried founded, and 101 debtors filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on

Nov. 11 and 14. Founded in 2019, the company quickly rose to be the third largest cryptocurrency exchange by volume with more than a million users, according to financial news reports.

Bankman-Fried, 30, was charged on Dec. 9 with conspiracy to commit wire fraud; wire fraud on customers of FTX.com by misappropriating customer deposits and using the deposits to pay expenses and debts of Alameda Research, a crypto hedge fund owned by Bankman-Fried; conspiracy to commit wire fraud on vendors for misrepresenting the financial condition

of Alameda Research; conspiracy to commit commodities fraud; conspiracy to commit securities fraud; conspiracy to commit money laundering; and conspiracy to defraud the United States and violate campaign finance laws for making financial contributions to federal officials and fundraising campaigns under the names of other people in excess of \$25,000, which violates federal law.

Security preparations were underway outside his parents' home on the Stanford University campus as of Dec. 22, according to a video posted on Twitter. Alan Joseph

Bankman, known as Joseph Bankman, is a professor at Stanford Law School and a scholar on tax law. Barbara Fried is a professor of law emerita at Stanford Law School, according to their online Stanford University biographies.

The case will continue to be overseen by the federal court in New York and in the U.S. District Court in Northern California, according to the court order regarding Bankman-Fried's release. ■

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



Give back locally

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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.

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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.

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Courtesy Upward Scholars

Elia, left, practices speaking English with a volunteer at an Upward Scholars conversation club. The nonprofit, which benefits from donations to The Almanac Holiday Fund, helps adult immigrants with academic and financial support and career development services.

Upward Scholars drives multigenerational impact in San Mateo County

By Dr. Linda Prieto/
Special to The Almanac

Upward Scholars has helped over 1,200 adult immigrants in the Bay Area pursue upward mobility through a community college education by providing them with financial and academic support, career development and holistic services. Every year, our wraparound support — aided by dedicated volunteers and community members — impacts the lives of hundreds of students and their families.

One of our success stories is Elia, who left her home in Michoacan, Mexico, at the age of 26, seeking better financial opportunities in the United States for herself and her two young daughters. When she arrived, she set about obtaining a driver's license so that she could get to and from work. But as she prepared to take the exam, tragedy struck. Elia suffered a significant work injury that resulted in limited mobility in her legs. The prognosis was not hopeful — her doctors said she would be completely paralyzed in 10 to 15 years. Out of concern for public safety, driving was out of the question.

Today, 20 years later, Elia has beat the odds. Not only has her condition not worsened to the degree her doctors originally expected, Elia has worked to maintain much of her mobility through regular walks around her neighborhood in Redwood City. She has also earned her GED from Sequoia Adult School



and is well on her way to completing an associate degree from Cañada College, where she's made the Dean's List more than once. She has raised three children while working as an adult caregiver and caring for her ill father. But she hasn't gotten a driver's license, which has made everything else in her life harder, making her dependent on unreliable public transit and ride-sharing.

Though reluctant at first, earlier this year Elia began working toward getting her driver's license, with encouragement from her children, the clients she cares for, and the Upward Scholars staff. When Elia has a goal, she pursues it — and this fall, she passed the written test! While she still needs to take the driving test, Elia is excited about the future. Even a simple thing like getting a license can drive multigenerational impact: "It would make life so much easier. I would be able to drive my son to school; get to work and back much faster; attend in-person classes, especially when I transfer to a university; get to finally visit my daughter in Vallejo; and take my father to his doctor appointments," she says. Her whole family would reap the benefits.

Elia appreciates the support

Upward Scholars has given her since 2018. From textbook and food assistance to scholarship application support and Student Safety Net funding for rent, she knows her family would not have fared nearly so well during the pandemic were it not for Upward Scholars. When we first shared Elia's story with the Upward Scholars community, the support she received was astounding. Thanks to the generosity of an Upward Scholars donor, Elia now benefits from yet another kind of support: private driving lessons. Soon, Elia will be ready to take her driving exam and will be able to use her new skills to support her family in ways she's always wanted to.

Upward Scholars is one of this year's beneficiaries of The Almanac Holiday Fund. Donations are divided evenly between 10 nonprofits that serve local residents, and can be made online at almanacnews.com/holiday_fund.

For information about donating time, talent, or treasure to Upward Scholars, contact Jessica, Upward Scholars Marketing & Development Manager, at jessica@upwardscholars.org. Or, if you're curious to learn more about us, visit our website, upwardscholars.org. We want to hear from you. You can tutor or help a student like Elia practice their English skills, lend your specialized skills to the Upward Scholars team, or contribute funds to support our work. ■

Dr. Linda Prieto is the executive director of Upward Scholars.

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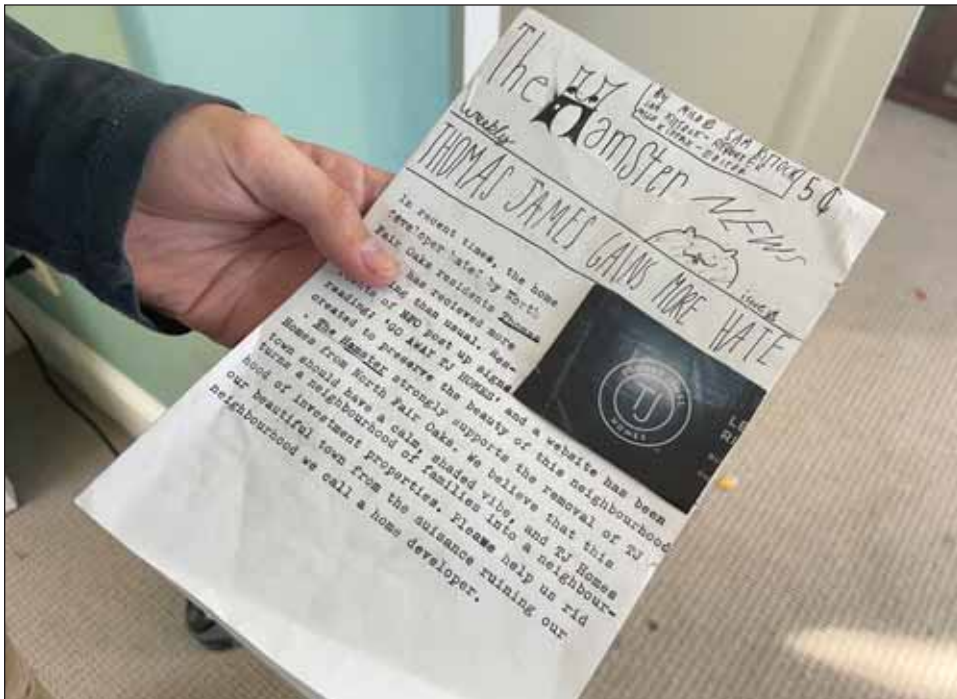
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Leah Worthington

Kittock holds an issue of The Hamster News, named after his late pet.



Leah Worthington

Hamster News editor-in-chief Milo Kittock's trusty typewriter.

HAMSTER NEWS

continued from page 1

the editor and advertising — though those have remained blank so far.)

Kittock finds most of his news by walking a tract of his neighborhood, roughly from Fifth Avenue to Marsh Road, looking for anything new or unusual. He's seen and reported on road work, minor traffic incidents and — one of North Fair Oaks' hottest topics — the apparent omnipresence of luxury housing developer Thomas James Homes.

After gathering story ideas, Kittock puts on his reporter hat, sometimes knocking on doors, calling neighbors and even reaching out to the authorities.

"A couple of blocks over there's a street called (Encina) Avenue that was being pretty much completely reconstructed," Kittock said of the roadwork. According to the county website, he said, the work was supposed to be done by November.

"But there are still trucks there as we speak," he said. Wanting answers, he placed a call to the county. "They just said that they weren't interested in being interviewed, and so that was a waste of time."

Without the luxury of a modern computer and word processor, Kittock writes the first draft of each story on his typewriter. He then makes any necessary changes (hello, editor hat!) before typing up the final version, again, on the typewriter. Though the cover art, headlines and crosswords are hand-drawn by Kittock, he recruits his father, James, and younger brother, Sam, for help

with taking and formatting the accompanying photographs. Sam also contributes an original comic with recurring cat characters for almost every issue.

"I still format the pictures to size, so he can cut them out," James said. He used to help his son with the photocopying process, but Kittock has since taken over.

"I joked that I was like the digital production and printing," he said. "Occasionally I help out with article ideas. Although usually he finds me not that helpful, unfortunately."

With stories and illustrations in place, the issue is ready for the printer — or household photocopier, that is. After being copied, rolled up and rubber-banded, the papers make their way into Kittock's delivery bag, a classic-looking satchel that his mother made with the words "Hamster News" stitched on the front. Kittock and his brother distribute copies on Sundays at the high-traffic corner of Fifteenth and Fair Oaks avenues, while subscribers receive their copies on Monday mornings.

Kittock, like any good editor, keeps records of all his work. He stores Hamster originals in an accordion folder labeled "Hamster News Files," with the word "Important" underlined and in all caps.

Though the paper is just under a year old, the seed for Hamster News had been germinating for some time. Kittock has always fancied himself a writer — he's written several short stories and even a novella — and got his start in the news as a gift to Sam.

"My little brother is obsessed with stuffed animals and so ...

I started making a newsletter," he said. "And then I decided I might as well branch out into actual journalism."

On the wall by his desk hang only the necessities, including a couple of art pieces, a calendar with the days meticulously crossed off and a portrait of bespeckled Theodore Roosevelt that reads, "It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed." Also visible are a tribute to Kittock's late hamster, Theodore Roosevelt (or "Ted Ted"), who died earlier this year and was the inspiration for the paper's name, and a hand-scrawled note-to-self: "Make sure the paper's on the streets by 5, we gotta keep this little thing alive!"

Despite being the founder and sole contributor (so far) of the local, bi-weekly publication, Kittock isn't attached to any titles just yet.

"Partially (a journalist, partially an editor)," he said. "I just don't know exactly what to think of myself."

Still, with the one-year anniversary of The Hamster News just around the corner, he intends to keep the stories going for as long as he can. Kittock is currently working on a special holiday edition, which will include full color photos of the best Christmas lights in the neighborhood, as well as a couple of follow-up stories on TJ Homes and Peter, the turkey.

"Well, I've definitely explored every corner of the neighborhood," he said. "And it's just (about) getting to know my way around the neighborhood and getting to know more people." ■

*Email Staff Writer
Leah Worthington at
lworthington@rwcpc.com.*

Antiques Roadshow premieres Jan. 2 with episode filmed at Filoli

By Angela Swartz

A 1976 manual for the Apple-II computer, a 1928 English sterling silver horse, a 1907 Pairpoint puffy owl lamp and more will all be featured on the season 27 premiere of Antiques Roadshow on PBS on Jan. 2, filmed at Woodside's Filoli Estate.

The hour-long episode was filmed at the estate in June, drawing about 2,500 people during a heat wave and power outage.

Producers hint that one item brought to the 54,000-square-foot Georgian revival-style mansion and 16 acres of English Renaissance gardens to be examined by one of 70 appraisers was worth up to an estimated

\$330,000.

The 23 categories of appraisals included paintings, sports memorabilia, toys, rugs, furniture and clocks. Each attendee was allowed to bring two items. By the end of the day, the crew had filmed about 150 appraisals.

This 25-episode season was also filmed in Nashville, Tenn., Boise, Idaho and Sante Fe, N.M. as well as other locations. Three of those episodes will take place at the Woodside estate.

The episode airs at 8 p.m. on PBS. Go to tinyurl.com/woodsiantiques for more information. ■

*Email Angela Swartz at
aswartz@almanacnews.com.*



Magali Gauthier

Crowds on the set of the Antiques Roadshow at Filoli in Woodside on June 22.

Sierra Nevada snow season off to best start in a decade, though experts heed caution

White Christmas is not enough to sustain what makes up one-third of California's annual water supply

By Olivia Wynkoop/
Bay City News Foundation

State water officials say the Sierra Nevada is experiencing its snowiest start to the winter season in a decade, thanks to a handful of storms that dropped several feet of snow.

November rains helped saturate the soils and primed them for runoff in the future, and early December flurries gave some areas up to 2 to 4 feet of snow, with more to come through New Year's Day, state officials predict.

The statewide snowpack is about 163% of average for this time of year, said Sean de Guzman, who manages the California Department of Water Resources' annual snow surveys.

The surveys forecast the state's water supply for a year based on

how much water content is in the Sierra Nevada's snowpack. The first snow survey of the 2023 snow season is tentatively scheduled to be recorded on Jan. 3.

But de Guzman cites the number with an air of caution.

"It's promising, but at the same time, we're all familiar with what happened last year in December," de Guzman said.

This time last year, snow depths were reaching 150% of normal levels: a hopeful start to the season. That was until California was hit with the driest January, February and March on record.

"We started off the year looking great," de Guzman said.

"But I forewarned everyone around that time that it's really, really early in the snow season," he added.

De Guzman said the 2022 snow

season had an eerily similar start to 2013's water year, which turned into the driest year on record despite its impressive snow levels before the new year.

A white Christmas is not enough to sustain what makes up one-third of California's annual water supply — the snowpack needs to be built up all the way through April to ensure the state has enough mountain snow to slowly drip off into state reservoirs well into the dry months.

As California further descends into challenges associated with climate change, state agencies are bracing to deal with the most unpredictable circumstances, teetering back and forth between record dry times and record wet ones.

It makes it challenging to plan for how much water the state will

have in the upcoming year, said de Guzman.

"Maybe 10 years ago, in 2013, we never thought of that being a possibility, especially with the wettest months of the year being December, January and February. Who's to predict that you'd basically get no rain and snow during those months?" de Guzman said. "It's now in the realm of possibility."

And one good season of snow will likely not be enough to make up for the estimated two to three years of rain and snow that did not arrive in California's previous decade.

De Guzman said the only path forward is setting up resilient water infrastructure that can conserve every drop. His own team is looking to modernize how DWR measures snow in the

multiple surveys it collects at the Phillips Station southwest of Lake Tahoe every year.

Instead of using snow tubes and sensors in the wilderness, the future may be using aerial remote sensing, in which a scanning device attached to an airplane captures exactly how much water content is in a 3-by-3 meter grid, said de Guzman.

"It's really exciting to see where we were and where we're headed to," he said.

De Guzman added that he's confident that the snowpack will be well above average once they collect the first survey at the beginning of 2023.

"Winter is a long way to come. Hopefully nothing like last year or even 2013 will happen again, and we will just keep building up more snow," de Guzman said. ■

HOUSING ELEMENT

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O'Keefe said that he doesn't believe developers would be lining up to apply for building permits as they are in Santa Monica, where the builder's remedy was recently instituted.

Savaree said the State Attorney General Rob Bonta would be required to meet with the town twice and discuss how the town intends to get into compliance with the housing element. The attorney general's office could then sue the town or levy fines.

"The builder's remedy is out there," she said. "It's a new law there, so there's not a lot of experience with its application at this point."

Next steps

Town staff and consultants are meeting with HCD on Jan. 5 to discuss the modified plan to get additional feedback, according to Shaw.

Feedback from HCD will be presented at the Town Council meeting on Jan. 10.

"While I support the removal of the town-owned sites due to the added numbers created by the HCD demand for the vacant sites inventory, it is possible that the town-owned sites may be put back onto the plan at the direction of HCD on Jan. 5," Shaw said in an email. ■

Email Angela Swartz at aswartz@almanacnews.com.

STANFORD

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year for the next century and still remain within the boundary.

Alice Kaufman, policy and advocacy director for Green Foothills, a local environmental group, cited the study's findings and argued that Stanford's request to retain a 25-year horizon "makes no sense."

"It can only be interpreted as a request that Stanford be given the go-ahead to sprawl into the hillsides rather than accommodating their future growth inside the AGB, which would go against the county general plan policy as well as all the principles of smart growth, sustainability and climate-smart development," Kauffman said.

Others took issue with Stanford's assertion that a 99-year planning horizon is too long. Supervisor Joe Simitian, whose district covers Palo Alto and the Stanford area, pointed to Stanford Research Park, a sprawling business district owned by the university that includes about 150 companies, including Lockheed Martin, HP and VMware. Simitian said that Stanford felt it was appropriate to set 99 years as an appropriate term period for its leases, which generate revenue but don't play a direct role in its educational mission.

"There are 99-year leases on that property," Simitian said. "I just find it intellectually inconsistent to say, 'Oh my gosh! Ninety-nine years is too long!', when the university itself has made a decision in the past to lease its

property for 99 years, apparently concluding that they could live with that if it generated revenue."

Simitian and the board also proved sympathetic to Palo Alto's request for a meeting with the county and Stanford, consistent with a 1985 land-use agreement between the three parties. Mayor Pat Burt submitted a letter on behalf of the city earlier this month formally requesting "consultation and discussion among the three parties so that we might renew our common understanding and steps forward." Simitian and the board directed staff to follow up on Palo Alto's request. They also requested that any new "streamlining" provisions for Stanford housing developments include mechanisms for notifying residents of Palo Alto and other neighboring communities.

Supervisors Otto Lee and Susan Ellenberg both supported the new requirements that Stanford build housing for staff and faculty on its campus as part of any future academic

expansion. Both alluded to the university's recent buying spree of residential properties in Palo Alto and Menlo Park, including its purchase of Oak Creek Apartments, a 759-apartment complex on Sand Hill Road. Lee likened Stanford's purchases of housing in surrounding communities to meet its own needs to "going backwards."

"When Stanford bought those complexes, it really was not increasing but actually decreasing the housing stock for our communities," Lee said.

Ellenberg agreed and said her priority as a supervisor is to create "additional accessible affordable housing" in the county.

"I want to also be clear that new housing should mean new units," she said. "If we're merely changing ownership, we're not adding housing to the overall stock and that has to be an important priority." ■

Email Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@paweekly.com.

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Veronica Weber

Students sit outside the Cecil H. Green library at Stanford University in 2016.

MENLO REVIEW

continued from page 1

and 83 parcels for building, including 3,644 housing units in projects that are already in the pipeline — either proposed, approved or under construction. The state rejected Menlo Park's first housing element draft, giving the city a Jan. 31 deadline to resubmit an acceptable version to the state.

The focus on the housing element brought affordable housing advocates out in droves, culminating around the Nov. 8 election. Groups including the Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County, Menlo Together and Menlo Park Neighbors for Affordable Homes didn't just weigh in on the housing element, but on one site in particular as a kerfuffle developed over the site of the former James Flood Magnet School. Nearby neighbors feared that the possible 90-unit workforce housing development for the Ravenswood City School District would disrupt traffic and pedestrian safety while affordable housing advocates said that providing teacher housing was crucial.

Politics

The year started off with political controversy as Menlo Park's city manager, Starla Jerome Robinson, resigned ahead of her planned retirement amid allegations that the City Council was attempting to oust her. Longtime city staffer Justin Murphy stepped in as interim city manager in January, and was officially named city manager in June.

Politically, affordable housing was at the crux of Menlo Park's debate in 2022. Measure V, a citizen-sponsored initiative on the November ballot, aimed to restrict the Menlo Park City Council's ability to rezone single-family lots for higher-density use. All rezoning of single-family lots would have to go to a vote in a general election. The measure was soundly defeated by voters, but it created a great amount of political controversy during campaign season, with everyone from residents to state officials weighing in on it. The campaign to defeat Measure V raised huge sums of money, over \$300,000.

The City Council election in 2022 brought a sense of déjà vu, with Betsy Nash once again defeating Peter Ohtaki, only this time she was the incumbent. Council members Cecilia Taylor and Drew Combs retained their seats after running unopposed, and Council member Ray Mueller set to resign after winning a seat on

the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors.

Instead of appointing an applicant to fill the two years left on Mueller's council term in December, the decision was postponed to Jan. 9. Mueller has objected, saying it's unfair to his voters to make the appointment at a meeting that he cannot vote in.

Elections weren't the only political situation brewing in Menlo Park this year. The proposal by the City Council to remove parking on all of Middle Avenue faced controversy over a perceived lack of outreach to residents who would be affected. The removal of parking hasn't been up for final discussion yet, but the City Council has decided to explore the option as a part of the pilot project, only leaving a few parallel parking spots in front of Nealon Park. Several different outreach methods have been discussed, including going door-to-door to meetings with the affected residents and talking to prominent members of the community, but residents have said that outreach has been lackluster.

Community

The community saw many post-COVID reopenings this year. The Arrillaga Family Gymnastics Center in Menlo Park was closed due to the pandemic, and the City Council voted to add the gymnastics program back to the budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year. The program is currently hiring employees to bring the highly regarded gymnastics classes back. Popular community events, the Halloween parade and holiday tree lighting, both came back despite concerns about a lack of city employees to staff them.

The debate over management of the pool at Burgess Park was a hot topic this summer, as the city and contractor Tim Sheper wrangled over the renewal of a contract to operate it while the new pool in Belle Haven is being built. City Council members said that they hope to bring both pools under the same management, and after some heated debate over the terms of the agreement, Sheper ultimately signed on to continue management of Burgess Pool for another year.

The city has also grappled with staffing vacancies throughout the year, making it tough to hold events and carry out its goals. Staff shortages almost delayed the reintroduction of the Halloween Hoopla event after pandemic cancellations. In April, the city had about a 10% vacancy rate, with 27 staff positions open, including 10

executive and management positions. The city is working to fill the vacancies, but as of October, they were still causing delays within the city government.

Local businesses

Menlo Park's downtown fought to come back from the COVID-19 pandemic this year, with many of Menlo Park's interior design stores on Santa Cruz Avenue banding together to form the Menlo Park Design District. The Design District has brought businesses together to support each other and the local community, offering free design classes in hopes the downtown can become an alternative to San Francisco's Design District.

Menlo Park decided to continue downtown road closures, as the pedestrian-only areas introduced during the pandemic retained their popularity. The street closures can last as long as the California State of Emergency does, but after that the city will have to conduct an environmental review to make them permanent.

The city's downtown was given a clean bill of health in a downtown improvement study which offered suggestions to make it better, such as building residential units, in line with the success of local retail hubs such as downtown Redwood City. Other long-term goals included offering vacant storefronts for pop-up shops to increase the economic health downtown.

Environment

Menlo Park kept moving toward its 2030 environmental goals this year. The goals worked their way into several discussions of electrification and bay restoration as the city moved closer to the goal of carbon neutrality.

Menlo Park joined forces with BlocPower, which aims to help Menlo Park reach carbon neutrality as a "one-stop shop" for everything that residents need to electrify their homes, from incentives and contractors to lower-cost equipment. BlocPower also provides workforce training to provide the labor needed to complete the project. The city received a \$4.5 million state grant to pursue electrification as a result of this partnership and hopes to electrify 15 buildings in 2022, 100 in 2023 and 1,000 or more in 2024 and the years following.

Menlo Park and East Palo Alto also embarked on a bay restoration project to protect and restore 500 acres of shoreline habitat. The Strategy to Advance Flood Protection, Ecosystems and Recreation along San Francisco (SAFER) Bay Project



Magali Gauthier

A page from a Gutenberg Bible is scanned at SLAC in Menlo Park on July 25.

received a \$1 million grant from the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority.

Science and technology

Scientific developments in Menlo Park were massive this year, literally. A 3-kilometer accelerator at SLAC under Menlo Park was altered so that 1 kilometer of it was cooled to 2 Kelvin, or -456 F, which is colder than the coldest point in our solar system, Uranus at -371 F. The superconducting accelerator, known as the Linac Coherent Light Source (LCLS-II), will help future experiments at SLAC, and could lead to innovations in batteries and memory cards. The cryoplants are two of only six in the world that can produce such low temperatures.

Scientists at SLAC didn't just look forward this year, they also looked back. Some of the earliest printed pages were analyzed by an incredibly fine

and high-powered X-ray beam at SLAC to see if both Western and Eastern cultures worked in conjunction to develop their printing presses. SLAC is analyzing first editions dating back to the 1400s, including pages of the Canterbury Tales, Korean Confucian texts and pages from the Gutenberg Bible.

If looking to the future and the past weren't enough, SLAC is also looking farther than it ever has before with the world's largest camera. The Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST) camera is going to a northern Chilean mountaintop to look out into space, hopefully creating a map of 17 billion stars, including small galaxies made up of only 500 stars. The camera is expected to see 12 billion light years away and detect 20 billion galaxies. ■

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

Public Notices

995 Fictitious Name Statement

J CAFE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-292928
The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:
J Cafe, located at 246 El Camino Real, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
J CAFE, INC
1246 El Camino Real
Menlo Park, CA 94025
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 N/A.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 9, 2022.
(ALM Dec. 30, 2022; Jan. 6, 13, 20, 2023)

MOUNTED PATROL FOUNDATION
MP FOUNDATION
MPF
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-293018
The following person(s) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Mounted Patrol Foundation, 2.) MP Foundation, 3.) MPF, located at 521 Kings Mountain Road, Woodside, CA 94062, San Mateo County.
Registered owner(s):
MOUNTED PATROL OF SAN MATEO COUNTY FOUNDATION
521 Kings Mountain Road
Woodside, CA 94062
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 01/01/2012.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on December 22, 2022.
(ALM Dec. 30, 2022; Jan. 6, 13, 20, 2023)

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The year *in film*

The best, the worst and the most memorable movies of 2022

By Peter Canavese

Despite the best individual promo efforts of once-upon-a-time power couple Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, who looked to lure audiences back to theaters with video stunts and a meme-worthy commercial, respectively, theaters continued to struggle in 2022. So did streamers, as they attempted to turn their business models profitable (2023 will be the year that ends password sharing). But one thing hasn't changed: there's still a bounty of great films to discover from a year of cinema at theaters and home.

The year saw plenty of films ready-made to grab awards gold with evergreen topics: love letters to Hollywood (Damien Chazelle's "Babylon"), coming-of-age films (the Belgian heart-breaker "Close," father-daughter story "Aftersun," Irish drama "The Quiet Girl," cannibal romance "Bones and All," the science fiction-tinged "Wyrms"), and three twofers that dealt with coming-of-age and movie love: Steven Spielberg's autobiographical "The Fabelmans," Patrick Read Johnson's autobiographical "5-25-77," and James Gray's

autobiographical "Armageddon Time."

After viewing around 300 films this year, your Friendly Neighborhood Film Critic once again sat down to the daunting task of compiling a "Top 10 List," guaranteed to disappoint enthusiasts of one movie or another — heck, guaranteed to disappoint even me. Trying to identify the "10 best" films of the year bends objective standards to breaking: inevitably, any critic's Top 10 is a somewhat arbitrary list of favorites rather than a true proposal. So how did I come about the ten films below?

The final 10 had to be films that moved me, films that dazzled me, films that stuck with me, and/or films of near-universal sociopolitical import. A good Top 10 list has some variety: this one includes one documentary, one musical, four foreign-language films, and at least one certified epic. In the search for balance, and in an effort to limit subjectivity, I left out of the Top 10 some of my "personal favorites" of the year: the delirious documentary "My Old School," the aforementioned "Wyrms," French



Courtesy Kino Lorber

Saul Williams and Anisia Uzeyman's "Neptune Frost" depicts a high-concept, gender-fluid, musical allegorical, science-fiction dreamscape set in a hacker collective.

ode-to-theater "Lost Illusions," the profoundly moving documentary "Wildcat," and my inner-10-year-old's far and away fave, "The Batman."

Here, then, is my best effort to

send you on a cinematic scavenger hunt into the nooks and crannies of the cinematic year to discover films to move you, enlighten you, and excite you with sight and sound. Clip and save this list. Post it to your fridge. Work your way through it. And let's meet back here next year for more. Happy viewing!

The top ten films of 2022

10. 'Neptune Frost' (on video-on-demand platforms, Blu-ray, DVD)

Saul Williams and Anisia Uzeyman's high-concept, gender-fluid, musical allegorical science-fiction dreamscape contains a fiercely confident, hopeful vision of liberation from the ugliness of modern civilization. Set in Burundi and shot in Rwanda, this tale of workers mining the coltan that we use for our laptops and cell phones and cameras, and awakening to the resistance

necessary to overcome exploitation, employs phenomenal costume design, hair and makeup, lighting and photography to create a dazzlingly colorful and truly special cinematic art piece.

9. 'Bad Axe' (on video-on-demand)

In his feature debut, David Siev turns his documentary camera onto his family and his hometown of Bad Axe, Michigan. That family — of Cambodian descent but grown in diversity through marriages and romantic partnerships — resembles most American families: the product of difficult immigration and assimilation, bonded by a family business and traditions, but divided over the wisdom of public political protest in a town all-too-typically marked by pandemic-exacerbated economic depression and racial tension. Deeply emotional and ultimately hopeful, "Bad Axe" speaks eloquently to our shared American moment.



Courtesy A24

Writer-director Charlotte Wells' directorial debut "Aftersun" is an insightful memory piece, with a now-grown daughter looking back on a vacation to Turkey with her father when she was 11.

8. 'EO' (in theaters)

This modernistic reboot of Robert Bresson's "Au hasard Balthazar" by octogenarian filmmaker Jerzy Skolimowski ("Deep End") still stars an inscrutable donkey and puts forward a jaundiced view of humanity's runaway domination of nature, plowing forward until it dies. In a way, Skolimowski's version offers a purer version of the concept, less interested in any one human character or set of characters but rather doubling down on what an episodic structure can reveal about contemporary existence while consistently capturing and arranging arresting imagery.

7. 'Playground' (on MUBI and other video-on-demand platforms, DVD)

Childhood, such an important time in all of our lives, poses a creative challenge in accurately evoking it, due to generation gaps, commercial mandates and the delicate task of coaching young actors. Laura Mandel's "Playground," then, proves all the more precious in its immediacy, its immersion into a kid-sized world just halfway off the ground from the rest of us. An ensemble of gifted young actors navigates a story backwards engineered from a tragedy, to illustrate how the unthinkable becomes not only possible but inevitable.

6. 'Decision to Leave' (in theaters and on MUBI)

This superb neo-noir from Park Chan-wook ("Oldboy," "Snowpiercer," "The Handmaiden") cultivates a chilly elegance in telling the story of an insomniac detective (Park Hae-il) and the murder suspect (Tang Wei) who may be his femme fatale, his true love, or both. The romantic obsession that ensues ends up involving a kind of mutual voyeurism, conjuring comparisons to Hitchcock and, in particular, "Vertigo." Beautifully performed and photographed, with a surplus of fresh imagery, "Decision to Leave" is pure cinematic craft.

5. 'The Northman' (Prime Video and other video-on-**demand platforms, 4K Blu-ray, Blu-ray and DVD)**

Robert Eggers' wild and woolly Norse epic, not for the faint of heart, brims with mysticism and Jungian symbolism as its antihero (a hulking Alexander Skarsgård) doggedly pursues revenge. Through the power of directorial artistry and imaginative acting, "The Northman" transports us to an ancient, and thereby alien, warrior culture and spirituality and diction of epic poetry — a time and place when life was truly nasty, brutish, and short. Cycles of generational trauma travel through and culminate in visions both mythic and psychedelic.

4. 'No Bears' (in theaters)

Iran's greatest filmmaker again turns his camera on himself with the endearing, playful and unsettling metafictional narrative "No Bears." Jafar Panahi suffuses his latest with the joy of filmmaking and his gratitude at every opportunity to put into practice his well-honed craft. Panahi's cherishing of freedom is not merely theoretical: in July, Panahi began serving a six-year prison sentence in Iran for "propaganda against the regime." "No Bears" depicts the friendly and threatening sides of community, near a border that's just as dangerous as it is invisible.

3. 'Benediction' (on Hulu and other video-on-demand platforms)

The great English filmmaker Terence Davies takes on the life and loves of the great World War I poet Siegfried Sassoon (Jack Lowden and, later, Peter Capaldi), making of them a lyrical, spiritual masterpiece. "Benediction" proves vivid all around, in its imagery, its themes (the holy madness of unlucky love and the haunted, hard-earned nihilism of the "overeducated"), and especially its portrait of Sassoon, in a performance by Lowden that heralds a young talent on the order of Richard Burton or Anthony Hopkins.

2. 'TÁR' (in theaters and on video-on-demand, 4K Blu-ray, Blu-ray and DVD)

Courtesy Focus Features

Cate Blanchett stars as fictional conductor and composer Lydia Tár, whose rise and fall is captured in director Todd Field's psychological drama "TÁR."

Writer-director Todd Field ("In the Bedroom," "Little Children") returns, after a 16-year absence, with a magnum opus about the fictional composer-conductor Lydia Tár (Cate Blanchett). Convincingly taking us inside the tony, antiseptic world of world-class symphonies, the elites who traffic in and around them, and the ordinary people caught up in their orbit, "TÁR" deals with the artist's temperament, as well as abuse of power and cancel culture. Field's insinuating approach, which slowly drifts from uber-realism into dreamlike psychosis, matches perfectly to Blanchett's searing tour de force.

1. 'Aftersun' (in theaters and on video-on-demand)

In an astonishingly confident feature directorial debut, writer-director Charlotte Wells explores the coming of age of an 11-year-old-girl (Frankie Coiro); the troubled mind, body, and spirit of her father (Paul Mescal); and their loving but frustrated relationship. It's a memory piece (seen in hindsight by the grown child in her mind and on digital video) of the father and daughter's Turkish vacation and, as such, deceptively simple. Yet "Aftersun" proves patient, subtle, intimate, and devastating, with visual language — and two brilliant performances — articulating what the characters cannot.

Runners-up

"Close" (theaters); "Lost Illusions" (MUBI and other video-on-demand platforms, Blu-ray, DVD); "Confess, Fletch" (Paramount+ and other video-on-demand platforms, Showtime); "The Banshees of Inisherin" (HBO Max and other video-on-demand platforms, Blu-ray, DVD); "The Inspection" (video-on-demand); "Saint Omer" (coming soon to theaters); "She Said" (Prime Video and other video-on-demand platforms); "Return to Seoul" (in theaters); "Nope" (Peacock and other video-on-demand platforms, 4K

Blu-ray, Blu-ray, DVD); "A Love Song" (video-on-demand).

The bottom five films of 2022**5. 'Moonfall'**

The moon is hollow in "Moonfall," just like the Roland Emmerich disaster movie the planetary body features in. Makes Emmerich's "Independence Day" look like an Anton Chekhov play.

4. 'Mack & Rita'

In an ill-advised spin on "Big," a magical tanning bed turns a 30-year-old (Elizabeth Lail) into a 70-year-old (Diane Keaton). Pretty much devoid of insight and painfully unfunny, spelling embarrassment for Keaton.

3. 'Hot Seat'

The uncancellable Mel Gibson lends his name — and his increasingly grizzled star power — to this crappy "action" cheapie, also starring "Johnny Drama" himself, Kevin Dillon. A ludicrous action fantasy full up on lunkheaded macho banter and every cliché in the cat-and-mouse cyber-thriller handbook.

2. 'Jeepers Creepers: Reborn'

They shouldn't have bothered with this third sequel to the 2001 horror film "Jeepers Creepers." A total fail that just keeps finding ways to go lower over the course of an interminable 88 minutes.

1. 'Fortress: Sniper's Eye'

Now that Bruce Willis has shared his aphasia diagnosis, Willis' no-budget action clunkers like "Fortress: Sniper's Eye" are worse than just terrible; they're exploitation. If you value your memories of Willis, avoid at all costs.

The best heroes

5. Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig) in "Glass Onion" (Netflix)
4. Fletch (Jon Hamm) in "Confess, Fletch" (Paramount+ and other video-on-demand platforms, Showtime)
3. Oppy in "Good Night, Oppy" (Prime Video)

2. Alluri Sitarama Raju (Ram Charan) and Komaram Bheem (N. T. Rama Rao, Jr.) in "RRR" (Netflix)

1. General Nanisca (Viola Davis) in "The Woman King" (Prime Video and other video-on-demand platforms, 4K Blu-ray, Blu-ray, DVD)

The worst villains

5. "Jean Jacket" in "Nope" (Peacock and other video-on-demand platforms, 4K Blu-ray, Blu-ray, DVD)

4. The Riddler (Paul Dano) in "The Batman" (HBO Max and other video-on-demand platforms, 4K Blu-ray, Blu-ray, DVD)

3. Miss Trunchbull (Emma Thompson) in "Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical" (Netflix)

2. Julian Slowik (Ralph Fiennes) in "The Menu" (HBO Max Jan. 2)

1. Harvey Weinstein (Mike Houston) in "She Said" (Prime Video and other video-on-demand platforms)

More top documentaries

5. "Turn Every Page—The Adventures of Robert Caro and Robert Gottlieb" (coming soon to theaters)

4. "Retrowave" (Hulu, Disney+)

3. "Wildcat" (theaters, Prime Video)

2. "My Old School" (Hulu and other video-on-demand platforms)

1. "Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism" (Netflix and other video-on-demand platforms, Blu-ray, DVD)

The animated winners

5. "Belle" (HBO Max, Prime Video)

4. "Turning Red" (Disney+)

3. "The Sea Beast" (Netflix)

2. "Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio" (Netflix)

1. "Wendell & Wild" (Netflix)

Email Contributing Writer Peter Canavese at GrouchoReviews@aol.com.



Courtesy Aidan Monaghan/Focus Features

Alexander Skarsgård stars as Amleth in director Robert Eggers' Viking epic "The Northman."

Happy

Holidays

2022



From all of us at

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Food & Drink

OUR FAVORITE BITES AND BEVERAGES OF 2022

STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS REVEAL THEIR MOST MEMORABLE MEALS OF THE YEAR AROUND THE PENINSULA AND BEYOND

By Kate Bradshaw, Julia Brown, Sara Hayden, Grace D. Li, Sophia Markoulakis, Devin Roberts and Anthony Shu

This year was marked by a plethora of new eateries opening around the Peninsula and a spate of restaurant closures. We saw many restaurants face delays as they readied to open their doors, while others decide to close after long battles against forces like a difficult labor market, rising costs and the ever-present threat of redevelopment. Between the newcomers and longtime establishments (as well as some that are now out of business), our staff and contributors reflected on the past 12 months and compiled our favorite drinks and dishes of 2022. Let us know what we missed by emailing peninsulafoodist@embarcaderopublishing.com.

Kate Bradshaw, Peninsula Foodist

While developing and then narrowing down my list of the most memorable dishes and drinks of the past year, I realized I grouped my favorites into three categories: those that inspired my excitement for the future of our local restaurant scene; those that epitomized something special that was on its way out; and those that represented quality, comfort and celebration.

ALBONDIGAS, WILDSEED, PALO ALTO

I was thrilled to finally eat at Wildseed in Palo Alto this year, which highlighted for me the exciting possibilities of plant-based dining — particularly the ways that plant-based meat dishes can now capture what feels like a fair imitation of a juicy, richly flavored lamb meatball. The albondigas, an appetizer on the menu, are plant-based meatballs served with a spicy tomato sauce, black currants, pine nuts, vegan tzatziki and mint, plus grilled levain bread. It was the perfect way to start out a satisfying plant-based meal.

Wildseed, 855 El Camino Real Building 4, Palo Alto; 408-781-0112, wildseedsf.com. Instagram: @wildseedsf.

CHERRY CIDER, REDWOOD COAST CIDER, SAN CARLOS AND SAN MATEO

When I made the pilgrimage to catch Redwood Coast Cider on one of the last days before it closed its San Carlos location, I was blown away by the sense of community I found in an isolated corner of an industrial neighborhood. In fact, the owner recognized me immediately as the reporter who'd planned to stop by because my friends and I were the only ones who weren't regulars at the establishment. Sipping on a pint of the cherry cider, which had a delectable blend of tartness, mild sweetness and notes of cherry and sour apple, I was struck by how sad it was that such warm and inviting community hubs are so hard to come by, and that this business with such loyal followers would be closing its doors soon.

MARGHERITA PIZZA, AVANTI PIZZA, MENLO PARK

Avanti Pizza on the Alameda in Menlo Park is my go-to whenever I'm hosting friends and family for a quick and filling meal. It's so fast — with a roughly 10-minute turnaround time from order to pickup — and is tasty, reliable and allows you to feed groups of people without breaking the bank, which feels pretty underrated

and increasingly rare on the Peninsula. One of my favorite meals of the year was my backyard birthday gathering in June with friends and family around Avanti pizzas.

Avanti Pizza Fresh Pasta, 3536 Alameda de las Pulgas #4, Menlo Park; 650-854-1222, avantipizzafreshpasta.com. Instagram: @avantipizzafreshpasta.

Honorable mentions: "Smart Investment" cocktail and truffle fries from British Bankers Club in Menlo Park, the vegetarian paella at Telefèric Barcelona in Palo Alto, the sipping chocolate from Timothy Adams Chocolate and the crème brûlée doughnut from Cruel Donuts in San Mateo.

Anthony Shu, former Peninsula Foodist

Most of my favorite meals were already shared in the Peninsula Foodist newsletter, but here are a couple of others.

CHAR SIU, WING FAT, SAN MATEO

I made it to the 84-year-old Wing Fat in San Mateo shortly before its closing. The rhythmic strikes of a cleaver on a well-worn cutting board conveyed the restaurant's experience in preparing its signature char siu, barbecue pork. The restaurant's impending closure caused me to eat intentionally and appreciate each slightly sweet, lightly



Julia Brown

The Durst Farm asparagus soup from Flea Street in Menlo Park captures bright spring flavors.



Devin Roberts

Delicious rum drinks are on the menu at Wunderbar, the speakeasy at Wursthall in San Mateo.

charred and ruby red bite.

FAJITAS, LA NUEVA PERLA, SOUTH SAN FRANCISCO

Readers might remember how my suburban Peninsula childhood induced an enduring obsession with Chili's. I satisfied my love of sizzling, smoky platters of bell peppers at South San Francisco's La Nueva Perla, where handmade tortillas envelop well-seasoned fajitas.

La Nueva Perla, 222 Lux Ave., South San Francisco; 650-741-6696, lanuevaperlarestaurant.com.

Sara Hayden, former Peninsula Foodist

KOUGIN AMANN, MANRESA BREAD, MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

I finally made it to Manresa Bread and indulged in the legendary kouign amann. I had it at the end of a mini road trip in celebration of my fifth wedding anniversary, and it made our time on the road particularly special. I also happened to be pregnant with our first kiddo, and it was one of those moments when bread and pastry sounded particularly appealing.

The kouign amann's list of ingredients is short and sweet. It includes flour, water, sugar, salt, yeast and barley malt syrup. At Manresa Bread, these simple pleasures truly add up to something greater than the sum of their parts — a sweet treat for a sweet occasion.

I've since delivered my daughter. She's on a milk-only diet at the moment. In the meantime, I'll gladly take another kouign amann and look forward to sharing baked goods with her when she's older.

Pop into one of Manresa Bread's five locations for bread, pastries, toast and sandwiches. Come for the food and stay

for the craft, process and passion — founder Avery Ruzicka says Manresa Bread is a place of learning. It will continue to be so even after the January closing of the three-Michelin-starred Manresa restaurant, where Ruzicka first found her love of bread and went on to run the bread program.

Manresa Bread, 855 El Camino Real, Suite 138, Palo Alto; 271 State St., Los Altos; 195 E. Campbell Ave., Campbell; 40 N. Santa Cruz Ave., Los Gatos; 330 Ingalls St., Santa Cruz; manresabread.com. Instagram: @manresabread.

Julia Brown, editor

ASPARAGUS SOUP, FLEA STREET, MENLO PARK

Flea Street is one of my favorite special occasion restaurants in the Bay Area. I always appreciate founder Jesse Cool and chef Bryan Thuerk's focus on locally grown seasonal produce, which was on display in the Durst Farm asparagus soup on the menu when I dined at the Menlo Park restaurant for my birthday. The Meyer lemon and crispy shallot rounded out the bright spring flavors, and bits of olive bread in the soup added a nice textural contrast.

Flea Street, 3607 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park; 650-854-1226, cooleatz.com. Instagram: @flea_street.

408 SMASH BREAKFAST SANDWICH, HASH N DASH, IN AND AROUND SAN JOSE

Yes, this pop-up is largely based in and around San Jose (I visited twice when Lookout Coffee in Campbell hosted them this year), but it's worth waking up early for the 408

See FAVORITE BITES, page 22

FAVORITE BITES

continued from page 21

Smash. A breakfast sandwich with smashed sausage, grilled onions, an over-medium egg and a sauce mixing mayo, Tapatio and maple syrup, it balances a smokiness from the grill with the creamy egg yolk and sweet hint of maple syrup. Founder Brandon Salmon typically serves out of local coffee shops on weekends and announces his schedule for the week on social media. He sells out every pop-up, so get there early to snag your sandwich.

Hash N Dash pop-up,
Instagram: @hashndashsj.

DETROIT-STYLE PIZZA, THE PIZZA SERIES, STANFORD

I'm a fan of pizza that can withstand a slew of toppings, with a thick crust and flavorful tomato sauce sans endless gooey strings of cheese. Matt Driscoll and The Pizza Series deliver with their Detroit-style pizza, which I picked up after a visit to the Stanford campus shortly after the eatery opened in the spring. The slight char on the corner pieces added a satisfying crunch that complemented pops of pepperoni and mushroom, and the tomato sauce tasted like it had been simmering on a stovetop all day. I look forward to picking up a pizza on the way home from trips to Santa Cruz when Driscoll opens his Scotts Valley location soon.

The Pizza Series, 459 Lagunita Drive, Stanford (inside The Treehouse); 650-723-4500, thepizzaseries.com. Instagram: @the_pizza_series.



Devin Roberts

The Plato de Arrachera at La Fonda in Redwood City contains skirt steak, chorizo, refried beans, cambray onions, roasted jalapeno and handmade tortillas.

Honorable mentions: Chicken shawarma wrap from Shawarmaji in Santa Clara, boozy cold brew from Sun of Wolf in Palo Alto, the Gem sandwich from Hidden Spot in South San Francisco and the masala dosa from Madras Cafe in Sunnyvale.

Devin Roberts, photographer

PLATO DE ARRACHERA, LA FONDA, REDWOOD CITY

La Fonda is located in a small and unassuming strip plaza off of El Camino and offers an elevated yet comfortable Mexican food experience with one of the most comprehensive mezcal and tequila collections in the Bay Area. I ordered the Plato de Arrachera, made with skirt steak, chorizo, refried beans,

cambray onions, roasted jalapeno and handmade tortillas. It emerged as a perfectly seared skirt steak, presented beautifully on a wooden engraved platter with delicious sides, including incredible chorizo. I recommend finishing the meal with the flan.

La Fonda, 820 Veterans Blvd., Redwood City, 650-362-3069; Instagram: @la_fonda_restaurant_and_bar.

SIDEWINDER'S FANG AND DRAGON SLAYER, WUNDERBAR, SAN MATEO

Wunderbar is a reservation-only speakeasy located below Wursthall in downtown San Mateo. They feature classic cocktails and a riff on those classics. The Sidewinder's Fang

and Dragon Slayer are two of the most delicious rum drinks found outside a full-blown tiki bar. They are well-balanced and made with the best booze and freshest ingredients. To find the entrance, follow the white rabbit.

Wunderbar, 310 Baldwin Ave., San Mateo; wunderbarsm.com. Instagram: @wunderbarsm.

SHOYU RAMEN, HIRONORI CRAFT RAMEN, SAN MATEO

The shoyu ramen at HiroNori Craft Ramen is made with 100% chicken broth, pork chashu, green onion, spinach, bamboo, kaiware sprouts and a half egg. I went on a Bay Area ramen odyssey this year and ate many distinctive variations, but this straightforward take was at the top of my list. The broth is flavorful yet balanced and the chashu is my favorite. HiroNori has several locations throughout California and makes their own original ramen noodles, stock and sauce. To prepare the shoyu ramen, they use soy sauce barrel-aged for two years. These barrels have been used for more than 300 years at one of the oldest soy sauce factories in Japan.

HiroNori Craft Ramen, 211 E 3rd Ave., San Mateo; 650-242-1223, hironori.com. Additional locations in Cupertino and Santa Clara. Instagram: @hironoriramen_bayarea.

Sophia Markoulakis, writer

SMOKY BABA GHANOUSH, CAPO, BELMONT

It was late in the afternoon during Orthodox Holy Week in

April and my cousin was here visiting from Saint Catherine's Monastery in Sinai, Egypt, where he is a practicing monk. After an afternoon church service at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross in Belmont, we walked across the street to Capo to catch up. The owners are accustomed to waiting on men dressed in long robes sporting tall hats and long beards. They also know not to correct a Greek when he orders "Greek" coffee, even if they refer to it as "Turkish." Our fasting feast included cups of coffee, a basket of warm pita bread, a bowl full of cured olives and a dish of the most delicious smoky baba ghanoush, drizzled with olive oil and topped with toasted pine nuts.

Capo, 2040 Ralston Ave., Belmont; 650-508-1000, capobelmont.com. Instagram: @capo_belmont.

GIGANTES PLAKI, TAVERNA, PALO ALTO

Taverna's gigantes plaki is the perfect example of how a dish using humble ingredients like giant (elephant) beans, tomatoes and herbs can be elevated when there's respect for the ingredients and in the hands of a skilled cook. Taverna's gigantes are tender and creamy (not an easy task), and the layers of flavor from the sweet tomatoes, fruity olive oil, crunchy pieces of dako, salty crumbled feta and tender microgreens all add up to a satisfying and decadent meal on a cold day.

Taverna, 800 Emerson St., Palo Alto; 650-304-3840, tavernarestaurant.net. Instagram: @tavernarestaurant.

NICK'S FRIES AND BAKLAVA-TOPPED FROYO, NICK THE GREEK, SAN MATEO

Every time the temperature hit above 80 degrees this past summer, my husband and I would head to San Mateo's Nick the Greek to cool off in its air-conditioned dining room. The fast casual chain's location in the Laurelwood Shopping Center is our favorite — top 40 Greek music, friendly Greek staff and great food. We often split an order of Nick's fries piled high with gyro meat, feta and tzatziki. I always end my meal with a tart Greek yogurt froyo drizzled with honey and crumbled baklava.

Nick the Greek, 1324 W. Hillsdale Blvd., San Mateo; 650-345-4976, nickthegreek.com. Multiple additional Peninsula locations. Instagram: @nickthegreek.



Sophia Markoulakis

The gigantes plaki at Taverna in Palo Alto is made with giant beans, sweet tomatoes, fruity olive oil, crunchy pieces of dako, crumbled feta and microgreens.

Grace D. Li, writer

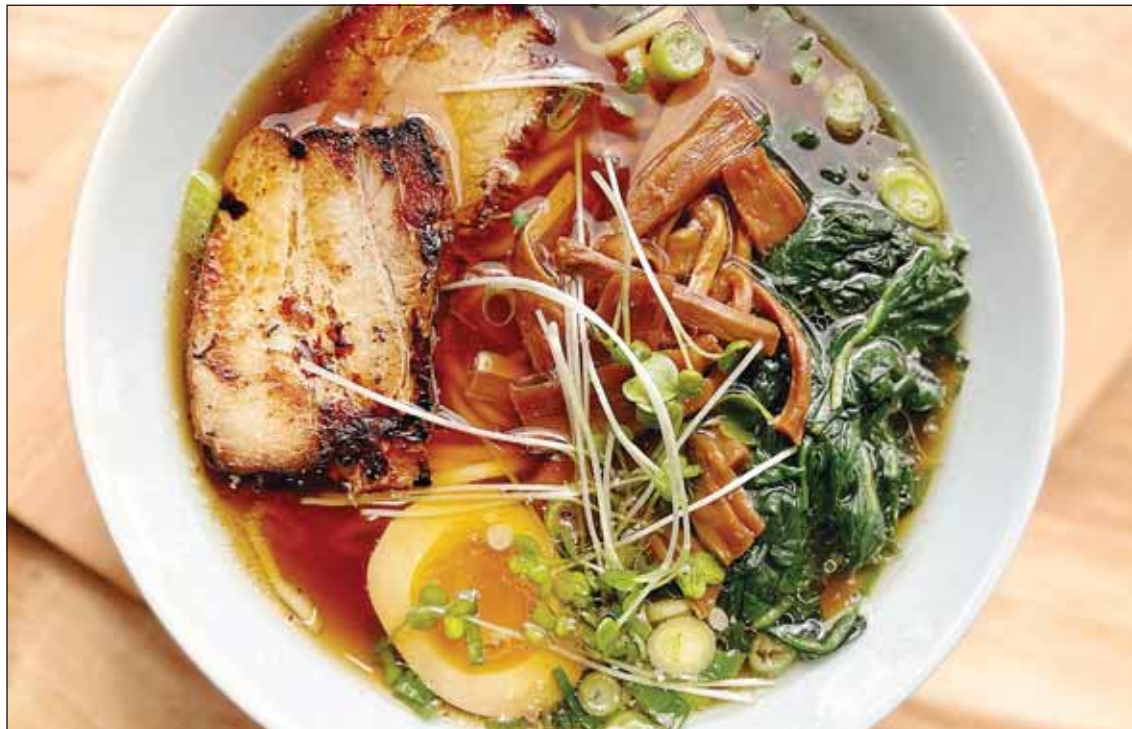
KALBIJJIM, DAEHO, SAN MATEO

This is my go-to place to take out-of-town guests, especially as the days grow colder. There's just one dish that everyone gets: the kalbijjim, also known as the braised beef rib. It's an enormous, hearty dish, packed with beef, rice cakes, carrots, potatoes, radishes and more, and it's meant to be shared between at least two to three people. Get it with the cheese and the waiter will set it on fire in front of you; the result is melty and bursting with flavor. Every time I've come here, the conversation stops when the food arrives and doesn't start up again until the meal is nearly over — all attention is on what's in front of us.

Daeho Kalbijjim & Beef Soup, 213 2nd Ave., San Mateo; 650-389-6689, daehodininggroup.com. Instagram: @daeho_official.

HOW TO FIX SPOILED MEAT, SURA-GAN, SAN FRANCISCO

The tasting menu here is nothing short of an experience. The recipes are inspired by the oldest known Korean



Devin Roberts

The shoyu ramen at HiroNori Craft Ramen in San Mateo is made with chicken broth, pork chashu, green onion, spinach, bamboo, kaiware sprouts and half an egg.

cookbook, and each dish is interpreted and updated by the chef with careful attention to detail. The highlight is their current main dish, How to Fix Spoiled Meat, reimagined as a 48-hour braised short rib served with walnut sauce, shiitake, radish and lollo rosso. It tastes like the ideal of Korean barbecue; fold the crunchy lettuce around

melt-in-your-mouth short rib, rice and a touch of walnut sauce to create the perfect pocket of flavor. I came here for a special occasion on a rainy evening in San Francisco and was immediately transported.

Sura-Gan Korean Fine Dining, 250 Hyde St., San Francisco; 415-376-8853,

suragansf.com. Instagram: @suragansf.

KITFO, ZENI ETHIOPIAN RESTAURANT, SAN JOSE

I love Ethiopian food and make it a point to try a new Ethiopian place wherever I travel, so imagine my delight when a friend recommended this

local Ethiopian place to me a few months ago. My go-to dish is the kitfo, which is a finely chopped beef dish seasoned generously and best served raw. It's the more sophisticated version of beef tartare, and it's always served on fluffy, spongy injera. Zeni's takes this dish and does it perfectly; each bite is bursting with flavor and texture. If you're new to Ethiopian food, let this restaurant be your introduction; if you're a longtime fan, it's easy to find something to love here. I've come here with friends and also alone, basking in the comfort of good food.

Zeni Ethiopian Restaurant, 1320 Saratoga Ave., San Jose; 408-615-8282, zenietiopianrestaurant.com. Instagram: @zeniethiopian. ■

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See you at the table.

Kate
Peninsula Foodist

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DeLeon Realty wishes you and yours a joyful holiday season, and may you experience health, happiness, and prosperity in the new year!



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中文諮詢請聯繫 Audrey Sun, DRE #01933274 電話: 650.785.5822 | DELEONREALTY.COM | DeLeon Realty, Inc. | DRE #01903224

