

The Almanac

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

JULY 14, 2023 | VOL. 58 NO. 45



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Local high school students build solar vehicle for national Solar Car Challenge

Palo Alto High team heads to Texas in hopes of qualifying for the 925-mile race back to California

By Emma Donnelly-Higgins

A group of Palo Alto High School students is headed to Texas to compete in the biennial Solar Car Challenge, a 925-mile race from Fort Worth, Texas to Palmdale, California starting on July 16.

The Palo Alto Solar Vehicle team has spent the past four months designing and building The Beast, a three-wheel, 100% solar powered vehicle, from scratch. The team will be eligible to compete in the seven-day race if they pass the initial three-day “scrutineering” test in which judges ensure that the vehicle meets the requirements of the challenge and that the driver — a student on the team — is capable of completing the journey.

The team is the only high school team in Northern California to enter the race, which is divided into tiers based on experience. The Palo Alto

team is entering the beginner’s Classic Division, in which the vehicle that travels the most miles in the shortest amount of time is the winner.

The Beast features a solar panel roof and a series of batteries that will store power for later use. At an average of 40 miles per hour, though it can achieve higher speeds, the vehicle will last for about six hours of driving per day, team members expect.

Safety is a key concern, as the vehicle will be driving on open roads across four states. The students work backwards from safety, according to parent and team Adviser Rupa Chaturvedi. “But we then have a lot of free-hand to design the way we want to,” she said.

The vehicle will be surrounded by a convoy of regular cars driven by parents and team members, one of which will

See **SOLAR VEHICLE**, page 11



Magali Gauthier

Palo Alto Solar Vehicle team driver Raghav Ranga, left, and build lead Alice Jambon, right, work on the front wheels of the car in Palo Alto.

Police: Atherton seniors were conned out of \$80K this week

Police chief warns residents to look out for financial scams

By Angela Swartz

Atherton police are warning residents about recent financial scams preying on seniors, two of which were reported in town this week.

On Sunday, July 9, a resident was contacted by phone by a scammer posing as a police officer, saying that the resident’s bank accounts had been compromised, according to a July 11 letter to residents from Police Chief Steve McCulley. The scammer told the resident he could fix the problems if the

resident sent him a cashier’s check for \$70,000, which he did.

In the second, on Monday, July 10, scammers contacted elderly residents in person at their home, and told that their grandson had been in a serious car accident and he needed \$10,000 immediately. The residents gave the scammers \$10,000.

“The consequences of falling victim to these scams can be devastating, both financially and emotionally,” McCulley said. “Many seniors have lost their life savings, experienced a decline in their mental health,

and even suffered a loss of trust in their own communities. It is our responsibility as a caring and supportive community to act and help protect our elderly residents from these unscrupulous individuals.”

McCulley said that the scams can take place over the phone, email, social media and even in-person interactions. Scammers may pose as representatives from financial institutions, government agencies, or charitable organizations, seeking personal information, money, or access to financial accounts.

In both incidents McCulley

described, the residents were told not to tell anyone about the incident. He noted this is a key phrase which signals that it is a scam.

To stop the scams, McCulley lists recommendations, including telling residents to reach out to friends and family if they have encountered any potential scams and encouraging them to be cautious when sharing sensitive details over the phone, online or in-person.

Often, victims of financial scams can feel too embarrassed to tell family members or contact the police, McCulley said.

“It is extremely important that the police department be contacted so we can initiate an investigation, help to recover the lost money, and work to identify and arrest the scammers,” he said.

The phone number for the Atherton Police Dispatch Center is 650-688-6500.

Age-friendly committee

Vice Mayor Diana Hawkins-Manuelian, Council member Elizabeth Lewis and City

See **SENIOR SCAMS**, page 12

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The annual **California Journalism Awards** competition, which celebrates excellence in reporting, design, photography and multimedia recognized our Peninsula team with **17 awards** in the following categories:

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- Feature Photo
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HERE'S WHAT SOME OF THE JUDGES OF THE 2022 CALIFORNIA JOURNALISM AWARDS ARE SAYING ABOUT OUR WORK —

An inquiry into the accidental death of an electrical worker, finding significant culpability on the part of Palo Alto. The level of well-documented detail was exceptional, especially given the lack of cooperation from a range of rejected sources. Meticulous work.

— First Place, Investigative Reporting

Comprehensive. Balanced and readable article that fully explains, with well-chosen quotes, the reasons for the city's and the business owners' views on a development of interest to residents.

— Second Place, Coverage of Business and The Economy

Great story, well told. This piece had RHNA numbers explained, NIMBYism on parade, attorneys and former elected official behaving badly — just great work.

— First Place, Coverage of Local Government

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Sue Dremann

Nina Chuang rallied students against the Supreme a court of the United States ruling on affirmative action at Stanford University on July 5.

Stanford students rally over Supreme Court's affirmative action decision

By Sue Dremann

A rally at Stanford University's White Plaza on July 5 brought together students of many races from seven universities — Stanford, University of California Berkeley, California State Universities at East Bay, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose and San Diego — who said they have deep concern

and outrage over the future of access to higher education for minority students after the Supreme Court's June 29 decision against affirmative action.

Rally attendees from the Asian American community said the plaintiffs, who were Asian American, had pitted their minority group against others, namely Black and brown minorities, even though all have struggled

against societal and political discrimination and racism.

Less than a week earlier, a panel at Stanford Law School also analyzed the ruling and its future impact on education for students of color, now that the court has determined race can't be used as criteria for admission in colleges and universities.

See **RALLY**, page 18

For new chief, Woodside fire is a family affair

Tom Cuschieri talks about his long history with Woodside Fire Protection District and working with his son

By Angela Swartz

For his entire firefighting career, Tom Cuschieri has spent his days in the hills of the Midpeninsula. Now, he's taking on his biggest role to date as the Woodside Fire Protection District's 14th fire chief.

Cuschieri, 53, is the successor to Rob Lindner, who retired on June 22. Cuschieri started in the

top job on June 26, after the fire board voted on April 25 to hire him after Lindner announced his retirement.

The department, which serves Woodside, Portola Valley, Emerald Hills, Ladera, Los Trancos, Skyline and Vista Verde, has faced increased wildfire threat in recent years. There's an enormous amount of fuel mitigation work needed

to prevent fires, including using a \$3 million grant to reduce fuel along Highway 35, also known as Skyline Boulevard. The department is also working with the town of Portola Valley on evacuation policies.

Fire Marshal Don Bullard is seeking more grants, Cuschieri said.

See **FIRE CHIEF**, page 14

Storms, wildfire prep and housing plans strain town budgets

Portola Valley finds itself in biggest financial bind

By Angela Swartz

Damage from winter storms, the high cost of planning for housing growth and fire mitigation work are hitting the annual budgets of Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside this fiscal year, which started July 1.

Portola Valley has entered a crisis mode, falling into deficit spending, as its police service costs increase and more staff to handle

Others saw added expenses last fiscal year because of intense winter storms. They also continue to invest in fire mitigation work and are seeing increased costs to plan for state required housing and safety plans.

Portola Valley enters deficit spending

Portola Valley faces financial challenges this fiscal year, including a general fund deficit of about \$1.6 million. Revenue is expected to come in at \$10.3 million, an increase of 7% from the prior year. Expenditures are expected to come in at \$11.9 million.

Last year, the town expected a \$720,096 deficit, in part because of all the expenses tied to planning for the state mandated-housing and safety elements that were due at the end of January.

The biggest increase to the budget, approved by the Town Council on June 27, is a new contact with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office for police services, which is expected to rise from around \$1.5 million last fiscal year to \$2.3 million.

"This 59% increase results from a cost recovery study by San Mateo County, which identified that the communities contracting for services with the sheriff were not paying the full cost of the service," according to a memo from Interim Town Manager Howard Young. "While the objective of full cost recovery is fair, the abrupt increase requires both an immediate and long-term response."

In the short term, staff proposes

using American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to offset the cost. To date, the county has offered to reduce the first year cost increases by about \$200,000. In combination with the use of ARPA funds of about \$400,000 this reduces the impact to the general fund by around \$600,000.

The town has been working with the county and the Sheriff's Office to reach agreement on the contract. The council is set to vote on Wednesday, July 12, to extend the contract to Dec. 31. It expired in June, but last month it was extended to September.

The magnitude of the deficit requires swift action to rebalance services and pursue new revenue sources (such as a parcel tax or utility user tax and fees), according to town officials. Pursuing these remedies will need to be a focus in the upcoming year.

"The use of fund balance is not sustainable, requiring thoughtful consideration on how to rebalance services and identify new revenue sources," Young said.

The 2023-24 budget includes \$1.16 million for road resurfacing projects.

No new staff positions are recommended this year, although employee costs increased by about \$300,000 due to benefit changes and salary increases. Other significant changes in the general fund budget include:

- An increase in the town attorney budget from \$140,000 to \$300,000

- An increase for planning and housing assistance for \$85,000

- An increase in the Woodside Fire District fuel mitigation program by \$40,000

- A budget of \$130,000 for post-housing element work identified by Council members Judith Hasko and Craig Taylor.

Atherton budget is healthy

For the 2023-24 budget, Atherton's general fund revenues are projected at almost \$21.5 million and expenditures are expected to be \$19.3 million,

See **BUDGETS**, page 16

Bear Gulch

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RATE CHANGE BEFORE THE CALIFORNIA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION (CPUC)

Beginning July 31, 2023, the water bills of California Water Service (Cal Water or the company) customers in the Bear Gulch District will reflect a pass-through of higher chargers for wholesale water and retail power incurred by the company. The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), the state agency that regulates Cal Water, has determined that expenses for energy and wholesale water are not under the company's control, and that a pass-through of those costs to customers is just and reasonable if properly calculated.

On or around July 14, 2023, Cal Water will submit Advice Letter 2488 to request authority to increase its annual revenue in the Bear Gulch District by \$3,807,591, or 5.9%, to account for the higher costs incurred in providing water service to customers. Pending the CPUC's review of Cal Water's calculations, the rate increase will be effective on July 31, 2023. With the increase, a typical monthly bill for a Bear Gulch residential customer with a 5/8" x 3/4" meter who uses 10 CCF of water (which is 1,000 cubic feet, or approximately 7,480 gallons) per month will increase by \$5.90, or 5.7%. However, water rates will also be recalculated to reflect a lower cost of capital ordered by the CPUC, which will slightly offset this bill increase when rates go into effect on July 31st.

A copy of Advice Letter 2488 will be available on the internet at <https://www.calwater.com/rates-advice-letters/> (please select the Bear Gulch District from the drop-down menu), and may also be obtained from the company's local office by calling (650) 561-9709. You may also contact the company's headquarters by mailing the Rates Department at 1720 North First Street, San Jose, California 95112-4598, or by calling (408) 367-8200 and asking for the Rates Department.

Cal Water offers many programs to help you manage your water bill including a Customer Assistance Program (CAP), (formerly, low-income ratepayer assistance program (LIRA)), water conserving appliance rebates, and other conservation programs. Please visit our website at www.calwater.com to take advantage of these opportunities.

Protests and Responses. Anyone may respond to or protest this filing. A response supports the filing and may contain information that proves useful to the Commission in its evaluation. A protest objects to the filing in whole or in part and must set forth the specific grounds on which it is based, and shall provide citations or proof where available to allow Commission staff to properly consider the protest. The grounds for protests are:

1. The utility did not properly serve or give notice of the filing.
2. The relief requested in the filing would violate statute or Commission order, or is not authorized by statute or Commission order on which the utility relies.
3. The analysis, calculations, or data in the filing contains material error or omissions.
4. The relief requested in the filing is pending before the Commission in a formal proceeding, or
5. The relief requested in the filing requires consideration in a formal hearing, or is otherwise inappropriate for the filing process, or
6. The relief requested in the filing is unjust, unreasonable, or discriminatory (provided that such a protest may not be made where it would require relitigating a prior order of the Commission).

A response or protest must be made in writing and received by the Commission's Water Division by August 3, 2023, the end of the comment period. The response or protest should be sent to the CPUC (by email to water.division@cpuc.ca.gov, or by mail to the Tariff Unit, Water Division, 3rd Floor, CPUC, 505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102) and to Cal Water (by email to cwsrates@calwater.com, or by mail to the Rates Department, California Water Service Company, 1720 N. 1st Street, San Jose, CA 95112).

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

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

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

San Mateo County Disaster Preparedness Day

The 19th Annual San Mateo County Disaster Preparedness Day is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 5, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The free annual event at the San Mateo County Event Center at 1346 Saratoga Drive in San Mateo will include CPR and first aid classes, interactive preparedness demonstrations, giveaways and free hot dogs.

Learn more at smcdisasterprep.org.

Help Atherton become an age-friendly community

Atherton town officials are recruiting residents 55 and older to help shape age-friendly initiatives for the town.

Residents can join a five-member task force to discuss improvements that the town can make to help older adults or attend a focus group to discuss initiatives that benefit older adults.

Contact Deputy City Manager Anthony Suber at asuber@ci.atherton.ca.us or 650-752-0529 for more information.

—Angela Swartz

Caltrain suspends service between Hillsdale and Palo Alto for electrification work

Caltrain is suspending service between the Hillsdale and Palo Alto stations on the weekends of July 15-16 and 22-23 for electrification construction and testing, according to a press release. Caltrain is offering bus bridge service, but encourages riders to seek alternate modes of transportation during the affected weekends.

—Cameron Rebosio

Ravenswood City School District seeking board candidates for open seat

Bronwyn Alexander has decided to resign from the Ravenswood City School District Board of Trustees after three years of service, creating a vacancy.

If community members are interested in becoming a RCSD trustee, the provisional appointment qualification form and application must be completed by noon on Thursday, Aug. 17.

Eligible candidates will then be interviewed at a board meeting at 6:30 p.m. on either Aug. 24 or Aug. 29. Trustees will be appointed at the end of the interviewing process at the board meeting.

Free concert at the Belle Haven library

The city of Menlo Park is hosting a free concert with live music by the traditional Cuban music group Carlitos Medrano Trio at the Belle Haven library on Saturday, July 15, at 1 p.m. The library is located at 413 Ivy Drive.

For more information, go to menlopark.gov and click on the events calendar.

—Michaela Seah

New 988 crisis line gets high use in its first year

New data shows high statewide usage of the national 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline after the first year with its three-digit phone number.

California crisis centers responded to about 280,000 contacts via calls, online chats and text messages since 988 replaced a 10-digit phone number last July, according to Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, which is the hotline crisis center for several Southern California counties and also serves as a statewide backup center for 988 calls.

The state had the highest volume of contacts in the U.S., followed by New York. Call volume increased 28% from May 2022, when the hotline had a longer phone number, to May 2023.

Online chats and text message were a major contributor to the increase, said Matt Taylor, program director for the 988 network at Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services, at a briefing July 11. The majority of people using those methods are aged 24 or younger.

"It shows that people are hungry and ready to use this service, particularly young people," Taylor said.

California is served by a network of 12 crisis centers. When someone contacts 988, they are routed to their local center, which can connect them to local and community resources. If the local center cannot respond, it goes to the state backup center at Didi Hirsch, or if that fails then it goes to the national network.

Those who are thinking about suicide or are experiencing a mental health crisis can call 988 across the U.S., 24 hours a day.

—Bay City News Service

Local teen's video project aims to shine a light on homelessness

Alexander Boesch, a junior at Menlo School in Atherton, is expanding his Homeless Horizons documentary

By Michaela Seah

Alexander Boesch, a rising senior at Menlo School in Atherton, is spreading awareness about homelessness through a video project called Homeless Horizons.

Boesch first started the project at his school's Community Action Summer Experience program, where Menlo School students research a social issue that matters to them.

From that program came a mini-documentary where Boesch interviewed homeless individuals, city officials and nonprofits. Now, Boesch is working to expand the project into a full length documentary.

Boesch believes that he can

help reverse the stigma against homeless people through giving them a voice.

"Oftentimes we have a negative stigma about homeless people, but after having conversations with some of them, I realized that the stories are very fascinating," he said. "They are just community members trying to live their life in the best way possible."

Boesch says that the medium of documentaries will allow audiences to digest information more easily and become more informed about homelessness.

"I'm trying to look at it through a different lens, and really focus on gaining diverse perspectives from everybody in the community," Boesch said.

One of the biggest obstacles

to housing the homeless is the lack of housing and the difficulty in getting affordable projects built. California is currently short by about 1 million units of housing affordable to very low income households, according to Dr. Margot Kushel, director of UCSF's Benioff Housing and Homelessness Initiative. Affordable housing projects face a range of obstacles, including opposition from neighbors or city governments.

"Many people in the communities are against these affordable homes, some people say there are safety issues, others say it will depreciate their home value," Boesch said.

Boesch said he thinks that his documentary will be very impactful. "I hope that many



Courtesy Alexander Boesch

Menlo School student Alexander Boesch is working on a documentary project about homelessness.

people can resonate to it and change their perspective or learn something new on the issue."

See his project at homelesshorizons.org.

Email Editorial Intern Michaela Seah at mseah@almanacnews.com.

Grand jury puts bike safety in San Mateo County under a microscope

By Cameron Rebosio

A grand jury report released July 10 showed that while San Mateo County cities have made improvements on bicycle safety in the last two decades, there's more work to do.

This is the grand jury's second report on bike safety in San Mateo County, with the first in 2002. The new report states that cities have put increased effort into making it safer for bike riders, a marked difference from the 2002 report, which came to the conclusion that bike safety wasn't important to most San Mateo County cities. Some of the improvements throughout the county include the availability of bicycle maps and routes in San Mateo County, with most of its cities and towns creating and updating their bicycle and pedestrian master plans.

Despite this apparent progress, the jury report says the county has seen no increase in residents cycling. It cites the California Household Travel Survey, which reports approximately 1% of residents saying they use a bicycle as transportation in 2002 and again in 2023.

According to the grand jury report, Woodside and Portola Valley share similar topography that affects bicycle use in the towns. The report notes that Woodside has focused

heavily on large community cycling events, while Portola Valley has focused on weekend cyclists. Woodside invested in a safe routes to school program for children who want to use cycling to get to school.

"In both cases, the communities concentrate on ensuring quality of life for residents," the report said. "They both see mostly recreational bicyclists ... however, the communities don't make a strong effort to track riders or accidents."

The report also said that the towns are inconsistent with the enforcement of rules, only paying attention to "problem locations."

The grand jury report said most cities and towns in San Mateo County could improve by tracking metrics, as cities can't fix problems if they aren't tracked. The report also listed consistent enforcement of cycling and driving rules as a core improvement to bike safety.

The jury report called upon the Bicycle Friendly America Certification by the League of American Cyclists. Menlo Park received the organization's Gold certification in 2017. Portola Valley and Woodside are not listed in the certifications.

"I'm glad that the grand jury dedicated their time to the important topic of bicycle safety because it's such an important mode of transportation," Menlo

Park Mayor Jen Wolosin said.

The report gave recommendations for ways cities and towns in San Mateo County to improve their bike safety, including effective education for both bicyclists and drivers about the bicycle rules of the road, consistent communication between branches of government responsible for bike safety and collection of enforcement details and data about cycling accidents and incidents in order to receive funding from agencies for bicycle infrastructure.

Portola Valley Mayor Jeff Aalfs and Woodside Mayor Chris Shaw said they had not yet read the grand jury report and could not comment on it. ■

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

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Local businesses team up to fight back against serial ADA lawsuits

By Emma Donnelly-Higgins

After being sued by a well-known Americans with Disabilities Act plaintiff, local businesses are exploring alternatives to simply mounting legal defenses, one by one. And along the way, they have found themselves going head to head with and, at times, unexpectedly aligned with disability rights advocates.

In 2021, Scott Johnson filed lawsuits against Bistro Maxine,

a casual French restaurant in downtown Palo Alto, and Tai Pan, a Hong Kong-style Chinese restaurant a few blocks away, as he has done against hundreds of other local businesses.

In those suits, he claimed that the businesses were inaccessible to people with disabilities.

Rather than settling — which would mean paying thousands of dollars in Johnson's legal fees — Bistro Maxine Co-Owner Stephanie Wansek and Tai Pan Director of Operations Tony

Han banded together to form the Bay Area Small Business Coalition as a way to leverage their resources and stand up to Johnson in court.

Today, the group consists of 47 small businesses across San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, the majority of whom were sued by Johnson. Sixteen of the businesses are located in Palo Alto.

Through their work on the coalition, Wansek and Han are also educating fellow small business owners about ADA compliance and advocating for change at the state level.

Pooling resources

Wansek, like many other business owners who face ADA lawsuits, first found out about the case against her restaurant when she started receiving letters from lawyers offering their defense services. They had spotted the Bistro Maxine lawsuit on a website called Public Access to Court Electronic Records. After talking to a few of these lawyers, Wansek sensed that they were more interested in settling the cases quickly than helping businesses fight them.

One letter described the law firm representing Johnson, Potter Handy, LLC, as "vicious."

"You must act quickly to protect yourself. ... The Potter Handy law firm is infamous for having no mercy or guilt," the letter stated. "Most of the time, a business decision is the best decision, which means spending the least amount of money, including on your lawyer."

The letter went on to suggest that spending more than \$1,000 on a lawyer to fight what they described as an "extortionist lawsuit" would probably be too much for a business. When these cases are settled, though, the amount varies based on the costs of the lawyers on each side and could come to upwards of \$15,000, according to one attorney who deals with such cases.

"It takes three or four sentences, and then they scare the daylight out of you," Wansek said. "It's so intimidating what they tell you."

Unsatisfied with the options before them, Wansek and other business owners went looking for an alternative solution.

"We realized that there were many (business owners) that were interested in doing something different, but we just were trying to figure out what that could be," she said.

The group eventually formed the coalition and hired Phil Stillman, a Florida-based lawyer who agreed to represent the businesses at a reduced rate of

roughly \$2,500 each.

"The idea was born that all these businesses, if they pooled their resources, could economically defend these cases without just paying (settling) them," Stillman said.

Stillman has gotten several of their cases dismissed by arguing that Johnson had no intention of returning to the businesses, which a person must have to show standing in a federal ADA lawsuit.

The real problem of inaccessibility

Potter Handy is a San Diego-based law firm whose Center for Disability Access branch is notorious for bringing thousands of ADA lawsuits in which they pressure defendants to quickly settle. The firm did not respond to requests for comment for this article.

Johnson has refiled some of the dismissed lawsuits in California state court, where the Unruh Civil Rights Act does not require plaintiffs to demonstrate that they intend to visit the business in the future. Under the act, successful plaintiffs are awarded up to \$4,000 per violation in statutory damages in addition to attorney's fees.

'If I could tell you how embarrassing and hurt I have been when I try to go to a business in 2023 and get told, essentially, "No, you do not belong and we do not want you."'

ERIC HARRIS, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY, DISABILITY RIGHTS CALIFORNIA

"The Unruh Act is what these plaintiffs all rely upon. ... (It's) the financial incentive," Stillman said. "What I don't support is using the Unruh Act as a kind of cottage industry where the lawsuits themselves are a business unto themselves."

Johnson, who is a quadriplegic wheelchair user, has filed over 1,500 ADA lawsuits in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California since the beginning of 2020. His disability was originally caused by a car accident in 1981 but was exacerbated in the 1990s when a truck backed over him as he attempted to enter a restaurant with no planned access for people with disabilities, the Sacramento Bee reported. In April, he was sentenced to 18

months of home detention for intentionally underreporting the income he earned from the lawsuits on multiple tax returns and was ordered to stop filing new lawsuits during this time.

Many of the cases against local businesses cite a lack of available ADA compliant outdoor seating. A lawsuit against 1 Oz Coffee in Mountain View describes the conditions Johnson experienced during multiple visits to the store in April and May of 2021, at which point the cafe was not offering indoor seating due to the pandemic.

"There was not enough knee and toe clearance under the outdoor dining surfaces," the lawsuit states.

1 Oz Coffee owner Yulia Kolchanova said that, in hindsight, her outdoor tables were definitely not compliant. She had only just added outdoor seating to the cafe when the city allowed businesses who had not previously been assigned outdoor seating space to do so.

"There were no special requirements and we didn't know for how long this would last, so we got the most affordable sets of outdoor furniture," Kolchanova, who is a coalition member, said.

The lawsuits against Tai Pan and Bistro Maxine state near-identical violations, describing insufficient outdoor dining knee and toe clearance. Several business owners said that they would have willingly brought an ADA compliant table outside had they known it was a requirement. The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design require at least 5% of seating spaces at dining surfaces to be accessible.

Kolchanova and other business owners said that they have no record of Johnson ever having frequented their businesses, some having checked security camera footage from the days the lawsuits claim he visited them.

Statewide change

In addition to fighting their own lawsuits, local business owners are advocating for change at the state level, directly opposing disability rights groups.

Senate Bill 585, introduced by state Sen. Roger Niello in February, would grant businesses a grace period of 120 days to fix any construction-related ADA violations before a lawsuit can proceed. ("Construction-related" refers to any new or existing facilities.) When the bill went before the Senate Judiciary

See ADA LAWSUITS, page 19



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Stanford University graduate workers succeed in unionizing

By Sue Dremann

Graduate-student workers at Stanford University have unionized, the result of an April vote that saw 94% of ballots cast in favoring the move, the Stanford Graduate Workers Union (SGWU-UE) announced. The new union will be represented by the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE).

The graduate students have said they long sought to gain better wages and benefits, a lower cost of living, stronger support for international students and better protections against harassment and discrimination at Stanford. Graduate workers provide services to the university that include teaching and research and numerous other kinds of support.

Failing to achieve their goals, in April the students mounted an election to form a union to bargain on their behalf. The student employees signed 2,500 union cards on the first day of the April drive, the union organizers said.

The National Labor Relations Board released the results on Thursday, July 6, which showed that approximately 51% of eligible voters cast a ballot. Of those, 1,639 voted yes (94%) and 108 voted no.

"The overwhelming margin of victory in this historic election shows that we have widespread support for our platform of better wages that keep up with the cost of living, and increased protections for graduate workers," said Chris Gustin, a fourth year Ph.D. candidate and international student in Stanford's

Applied Physics department. "We are excited to begin working toward negotiating a first contract with Stanford that can win us these goals."

The Stanford Graduate Workers Union is the first graduate union to complete both a card drive and election in one quarter. The new union joins ones at Dartmouth, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, University of Chicago, and other universities that have academic workers' unions for graduate students.

"The creation of SGWU-UE was driven by the same issues that have been central to the recent wave of graduate worker unionization across the country: stipends that do not keep up with the rising cost of living, supervisor abuse, high costs for

child care and dependent health care, insufficient protections for international workers, and many others," the new union stated in the announcement.

"As Stanford is both employer and landlord for a vast majority of its graduate workers, it is imperative that graduate workers have a say in their living and working conditions. SGWU-UE will fight to address these issues."

On July 6, Stanford University President Marc Tessier-Lavigne and Provost Persis Drell addressed the unionization in a statement.

"We look forward to working in good faith with SGWU. As has been our position throughout the election process, we are dedicated to the success of our graduate students and to our education and research

mission. These commitments will continue to guide us. We will provide information to our community about the next steps in the bargaining process as it becomes available."

The United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers has been selected as the exclusive representative of the Stanford Graduate Workers Union bargaining unit, the university noted.

"Thank you to all those who participated in the election and to those who provided support for the election process. As university leaders, we will continue to respect, support, and work to advance the needs of our graduate student community," the university stated. ■

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

CRIME BRIEF

Theranos founder Holmes has two years knocked off her prison sentence

Elizabeth Holmes, the founder of the blood-testing startup Theranos, may have her prison sentence reduced by nearly two years, according to records from the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Holmes was sentenced to 11 years and three months in prison after being found guilty on charges of fraud and conspiracy in January 2022. According to the Federal Bureau of Prisons website, her new release date is Dec. 29, 2032.

Holmes is currently serving her sentence at Federal Prison Camp, Bryan, a minimum-security prison for female offenders located 100 miles north of Houston.

Theranos was founded by Holmes after she dropped out of Stanford University in 2003. The company claimed to have invented a new blood-testing method that could detect disease from just a pinprick. Later, the company's claims about their technology were found to be fraudulent by federal authorities. In 2018, the company was shut down.

—Bay City News Service

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In person at Kensington Place

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Please join us for a compassionate presentation about the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the impact of caregiver grief. Counseling psychologist Nina Poletika will explain why losses in communication, companionship,

intimacy, roles and relationships can cause caregivers to grieve, even when their loved ones are alive. She will also discuss ways to remain energized in the face of relentless responsibility, ease the pain of ongoing loss, and alleviate the discomfort of a shift in identity. The presentation is ideal for all who are interested in learning more about unacknowledged grief, including professionals who are seeking information to support others.

Light bites and refreshing beverages will be offered.
To RSVP or learn more, please contact Lu at
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Meta launches Threads app and gains 40 million users overnight

By Spencer Otte /
Bay City News Service

Less than a day after its launch Wednesday, July 5, millions of users joined the short-form, text-based social media site Threads, which Menlo Park-based Meta positions as a rival to Twitter.

Threads, owned by Facebook and Instagram parent company Meta, allows users to sign up with their Instagram handle and import their list of followed accounts from the photo-sharing app.

By Thursday, July 6, 40 million users, including celebrities like Kim Kardashian, Will Smith and Oprah Winfrey, had joined the site.

Meta has described Threads as a text-based version of Instagram. Visually, the app resembles a mix of Twitter and

Instagram. Users can make posts up to 500 characters in length and include photos, links or video.

At launch, Threads lacks many features offered by Twitter, such as direct messaging to other users or using hashtags. Additionally, Threads lacks a search function and locks users into a continuously scrolling feed with a mix of algorithmically-suggested posts and posts by accounts the user follows, unlike Twitter, which gives users the ability to see chronological posts from accounts they follow.

San Jose State University Prof. Ahmed Banafa, a technology expert and engineering instructor, said that Threads had a head-start on other Twitter competitors due to the built-in users with Instagram accounts and the experience and scale of

their parent company.

"They have the ability to scale up very quickly, meaning they have the engineering teams that are used to dealing with billions of users," said Banafa.

Threads is currently not available for download in the European Union due to privacy and data concerns.

"The EU said no, until Meta fixes the privacy settings and gives them assurances about the use of data," said Banafa.

According to its app store listing, Threads collects user data including web browsing history, phone contacts, financial information, precise location and health and fitness information.

The rollout of Threads comes at a time of turmoil for its biggest competitor, Twitter.

Since Tesla CEO Elon Musk purchased the San Francisco social media giant for \$44

billion last year, the company has laid off thousands of employees and Musk has claimed in his tweets that the social media platform was facing bankruptcy. Last week, Twitter began limiting the number of posts users could view a day, saying in a statement that it was a temporary measure to combat "extreme" levels of data theft.

On July 6, lawyers representing Twitter sent a letter to Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta, threatening a lawsuit unless immediate action is taken to stop using "Twitter trade secrets" in their code.

Banafa looks at it as a "badge of honor" for Meta.

"That's a sign that they're successful. I mean, he didn't do it to Bluesky, he didn't do it to Mastadon, the others, he didn't even talk to them."

Musk has taken to criticizing the rival platform on Twitter, calling attention to the data that is collected by Threads

after users download the app and responding with laughing emojis to other users poking fun at Meta's app.

"It is infinitely preferable to be attacked by strangers on Twitter, than indulge in the false happiness of hide-the-pain Instagram," Musk tweeted on Thursday.

When asked for comment, Twitter's official press email auto-replied with a poop emoji.

Twitter CEO Linda Yaccarino released a statement on Twitter Thursday in reference to Meta's rival social media platform.

"We're often imitated — but the Twitter community can never be duplicated," said Yaccarino.

Banafa said that ultimately, social media users will come out on top of the battle between billionaire CEOs.

"We are the winners here, because the more competition the better. The better the platform, the better the services," said Banafa. "They're competing to keep us on their platforms." ■

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING BY THE WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Public Hearing will be held for the Woodside Fire Protection District Board of Directors to consider enacting the following proposed ordinance:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT ADOPTING THE 2022 CALIFORNIA FIRE CODE (BASED ON THE 2021 EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL FIRE CODE), INCLUDING APPENDICES B, BB C, CC, D, L AND P ONLY, WITH LOCAL AMENDMENTS, ADOPTING THE 2021 EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE CODE, INCLUDING APPENDICES A THROUGH D ONLY, ADOPTING FINDINGS SUPPORTING THE LOCAL AMENDMENTS, ADOPTING A FINDING THAT THE ORDINANCE IS EXEMPT FROM REVIEW UNDER THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT, AND REPEALING ORDINANCE NO. 12.

The proposed ordinance is also identified as Fire Code Ordinance 13-2023.

All interested persons are invited to attend the Public Hearing and be heard on this matter. The Public Hearing will take place on July 25, 2023, at 7:00 PM at 808 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028. This meeting will be conducted in a hybrid format, and the public may also attend this meeting virtually. Details on participating by Zoom or other virtual format will be available on the published July 25, 2023 agenda for the Board of Directors meeting.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE: Every three years, new editions of the state building codes are published. The new codes and local amendments reflect changes in technology, fire safety techniques, and the building industry. These codes became the minimum standards for the State of California on January 1, 2023. The proposed ordinance also reflects local amendments with more restrictive building standards reasonably necessary because of local climactic, geological, or topographical conditions. By adopting the proposed ordinance, the Woodside Fire Protection District will be enforcing a code that is consistent with state regulations. Under state law, after the first reading of the title of the proposed ordinance, which occurred on June 13, 2023, the District is required to hold a public hearing before the proposed ordinance is adopted (Government Code § 50022.3). After the hearing, the Board of Directors may amend, adopt, or reject the proposed ordinance.

CEQA DETERMINATION: The Board of Directors will consider adopting a finding that the proposed ordinance is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

All interested parties are encouraged and invited to submit written comments regarding the proposed environmental finding and/or the merits of the proposed ordinance prior to the hearing or participate in the public hearing. Reasonable accommodations will be made to individuals with disabilities. To submit comments electronically, please forward them to djbullard@woodsidefire.org. To submit comments via U.S. Mail, please forward them to the Woodside Fire Protection District Fire Marshal to arrive no later than 5:00 p.m. one day prior to the meeting at the following address: 808 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028.

Please note that any challenge of the proposed action in court may be limited to addressing only those issues raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence submitted to the Woodside Fire Protection District Fire Marshal at, or prior to, the public hearing.

The proposed Fire Code Ordinance 13-2023 is available for review online at <https://www.woodsidefire.org/board/meeting-agendas/2023>. A certified copy of the proposed Fire Code Ordinance 13-2023 is also available upon request by contacting the District Office, at (650) 851-1594, 808 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028. Copies of the 2022 edition of the California Fire Code, the 2021 edition of the International Fire Code, the 2021 edition of the International Wildland Urban Interface Code, and all associated appendices and referenced codes and materials, are on file at the District Office, 808 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028 and are available for public inspection.

Run Dates: July 7, 2023 and July 14, 2023

Menlo Park plans to lower speed limits on key streets

By Cameron Rebosio

Menlo Park officials are looking into ways to improve safety by reducing speed limits on several local roads, including Middle Avenue, Bay Road and Santa Cruz Avenue.

The Menlo Park City Council in September directed city staff to look into lowering speed limits on residential streets. City staff is also looking into lowering the speed limit on Santa Cruz Avenue to 20 mph to protect businesses in the downtown "streetaries" program.

The council on July 11 got an informational report from staff that identified the following streets as under consideration for a speed limit of 25 mph, down from the current 30 mph:

- Bay Road between Marsh Road and Ringwood Avenue
- Bay Road between Ringwood Avenue and Willow Road
- Middle Avenue from Olive Street to University Drive
- Olive Street between Santa Cruz Avenue and Middle Avenue
- Ravenswood Avenue from Laurel Street to Middlefield Road
- Santa Cruz Avenue from the city limit to the Avy Avenue/Orange Avenue intersection
- Van Buren Road from Bay Road to its terminus past Iris Lane

The city is working from a 2020 engineering and traffic survey, and is unable to modify any of the proposed streets' speed limits without an ordinance, with the exception of Van Buren Road. Menlo Park city staff have placed 25 mph speed limit signs on Van Buren Road since it qualifies as a residential street.

The change corresponds with Menlo Park's safe streets program, with the aim of lowering overall speeds according to the staff report. Council member Maria Doerr said in a July 11 City Council meeting that there are streets in discussion that did not make the list in the staff report.

"Even though these other streets are not included on this list, the conversations are continuing with city staff," Doerr said.

The staff report found that the vast majority of motorists drove at speeds ranging from 30-35 mph, and the city is considering signs saying that the speed limit in Menlo Park is 25 mph unless otherwise posted. The city plans for the new speed limits to go into effect on July 1, 2024.

Assistant Public Works Director Hugh Louch did not respond to a request for comment. ■

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

Two people struck and killed on Caltrain tracks on the same day in separate incidents

By Palo Alto Weekly Staff

Caltrain reported two fatal pedestrian strikes at Midpeninsula crossings on Thursday, doubling the previous number of such fatalities in 2023.

A southbound train fatally struck a person at the East Meadow Drive crossing in Palo

Alto on Thursday, July 6 at 12:10 p.m., Caltrain reported.

There were approximately 68 passengers onboard train #508, with no other injuries reported. Transit Police cleared the northbound track as of 12:47 p.m., with train movement at 20 mph speed restrictions. Both northbound and southbound tracks were cleared for maximum

speed at 3:31 p.m., according to a Caltrain spokesperson.

It was Caltrain's fourth fatality of the year, and the second one on the same day, the transportation agency reported.

Mountain View police are investigating the death of a pedestrian struck and killed by a southbound train operated by Caltrain early Thursday

morning in Mountain View, according to transit officials.

The collision occurred about 1:30 a.m. at the Rengstorff Avenue crossing, according to a Caltrain news release. The train involved in the collision had 14 passengers on board and no other injuries were reported. ■

Bay City News Service contributed to this report.

HELP IS AVAILABLE

Any person who is feeling depressed, troubled or suicidal can call 988, the mental health crisis hotline, to speak with a crisis counselor. For San Mateo County, call StarVista's Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention hotline at 650-579-0350. People can reach trained counselors at Crisis Text Line by texting RENEW to 741741.

SOLAR VEHICLE

continued from page 1

contain a different judge each day of the race.

Some parents said they were drawn to the project by the hands-on, real world experience their children would gain as team members.

"They're doing a pretty serious project," parent Vishwa Rangan said. "It's the direction that kids need. They have all the energy; they have all the motivation; they have all the talent. It's just tapping it in."

Chaturvedi, who is a mechanical engineer, said she founded the Palo Alto Solar Vehicle team in 2022 when she came upon the

Solar Car Challenge while looking for extracurricular activities for her daughter, rising junior and team Captain Manasvi Noronha, who is "into cars." Realizing that they needed to form a team, Chaturvedi sent out messages on Paly parent groups asking for students to apply.

"Within 24 hours we had like 20-plus people signed up already," Chaturvedi said.

They interviewed the applicants and held an information session, eventually accepting all the students who were still interested by the end of the process. None of them had experience with building cars or operating the machinery that they would be using.

"We signed up for classes (and we taught the students everything from scratch," Chaturvedi said.

The students learned to weld, a skill they used extensively when making The Beast's steel frame.

"We had lofty plans of making this curvaceous, aerodynamic, gorgeous thing. And then we learned to weld and we realized ... this thing is going to be a box," Build Lead Alice Jambon, who is a rising junior, said. "It didn't really look like a car until we actually set it down on its three wheels.

Benjamin Gao, the current team lead for the Stanford Solar Car Project, emphasized the amount of knowledge required to build even the

most basic solar car.

"Just to make sure that the battery, for example, can communicate with the computer that talks to the motors and talks to the solar panels. ... For really any team with any kind of engineering capacity, that's a tremendous challenge," Gao said.

Each student's family was expected to contribute \$2,000 to the team as an annual enrollment fee. Individuals and companies like CloudPaths have also made donations to the \$50,000 project. Funds have gone toward supplies, transportation and access to Maker Nexus, a makerspace in Sunnyvale. This summer, the students have been spending an average of five to six hours a day,

six days a week working in the space, one parent said.

The Beast will be disassembled and driven to Dallas, while 12 team members, including parent chaperones, travel there by plane to accompany the vehicle on its journey back across half the country. The group is seeking additional funds for their trip via GoFundMe. Applications to join the team for the 2024 season are open. ■

Visual Journalist Magali Gauthier contributed to this report.

Email Editorial Intern Emma Donnelly-Higgins at donnellyhiggins@pawebly.com.

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Menlo Park Mid Year Market Report

January 1, 2023 - June 30, 2023

TOP 10 SALES*	
1. \$8,900,000 35 Hesketh Drive	2. \$8,880,000 1 Princeton Road
3. \$8,800,000 935 Peninsula Way	4. \$8,258,000 53 Politzer Drive
5. \$8,200,000 455 San Mateo Drive	6. \$8,200,000 936 Hobart Street
7. \$7,750,000 836 Harvard Avenue	8. \$7,495,000 740 Olive Street
9. \$7,300,000 5 Cedar Court	10. \$6,800,000 1710 Croner Avenue

ACTIVE LISTING

MY 23: 240 (-8%)
MY 22: 261

PENDING LISTING

MY 23: 144 (-28%)
MY 22: 201

SOLD LISTING

MY 23: 140 (-28%)
MY 22: 195

AVERAGE SALES PRICE

MY 23: \$3,452,459 (+4%)
MY 22: \$3,307,806

AVERAGE SOLD DAYS ON MARKET

MY 23: 24 (+71%)
MY 22: 14

SALE/LIST PRICE

MY 23: 100.60% (-6%)
MY 22: 107.30%

AVERAGE SALES PRICE/SQ FT

MY 23: \$1,495 (-7%)
MY 22: \$1,612

MONTHS OF INVENTORY

MY 23: 2.40 (+85%)
MY 22: 1.30

30 YEAR MORTGAGE RATE

MY 23: 6.84% (+17%)
MY 22: 5.85%

Source: Zillow

*Mid Year 2023 compared to Mid Year 2022

*Source: MLS (Listings for Single Family Properties | Townhomes | Condos)

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Police car catches fire after being rammed by fraud suspects trying to escape

By Sue Dremann

Palo Alto police arrested two felony fraud suspects and seized a loaded handgun on Friday night, July 7, after a one-mile pursuit during which the alleged criminals rammed their truck into patrol cars twice, injuring two officers and setting one car on fire, police said.

An employee at First Tech Federal Credit Union, located at the Palo Alto Square at 3000 El Camino Real, called police at about 5 p.m. to report that a man was attempting to fraudulently withdraw money from an account that wasn't his. The employee then told dispatchers that the man was leaving in a vehicle.

A responding patrol officer

arrived within a minute and spotted the suspect's black Ford F-150 pickup truck in the credit union's parking lot. The officer positioned his marked patrol car behind the truck, and the suspect abruptly reversed the truck, striking the front of the patrol car. The officer was uninjured, but the car sustained moderate damage. The suspect drove forward over a curb and sped off with officers in pursuit.

Officers chased the truck about one mile into the Evergreen Park neighborhood, until it reached a dead end on the 400 block of Leland Avenue, where it drove into a driveway.

Officers pulled in behind the truck and were rammed when the man drove the truck in reverse.

He hit the front of the patrol car with enough force to deploy the police car's airbags and ignite a fire in the engine compartment. Both he and his passenger were unable to drive any farther and were detained without any further incident, police said.

The second patrol vehicle sustained extensive damage. One officer in the second patrol car suffered a broken hand bone and abrasions; a second officer in the car had abrasions to the face, police said. Both were treated and released at a local hospital. Neither suspect was injured.

Police found a loaded handgun, narcotics and numerous fraudulently manufactured identification cards inside the truck. Investigators later determined

the truck was also fraudulently obtained using another person's personal identifying information.

Officers booked a 39-year-old man into the Santa Clara County Main Jail for eight felony charges, including two counts of assault with a deadly weapon, reckless evading, carrying a concealed firearm, being a prohibited person in possession of a firearm, possession of a controlled substance while armed, and false impersonation. He was booked for an additional four misdemeanors including: false identification to police and resisting arrest.

The man was also booked for three outstanding felony warrants and two outstanding misdemeanor arrest warrants out of Sacramento Police Department

and Sacramento County for offenses including narcotics possession, fraud, evading, resisting arrest, illegal weapons possession and violation of probation.

Police booked the 27-year-old female passenger for two felonies: identity theft and false impersonation and two misdemeanors: resisting arrest and false identification to police; and two felony warrants out of Sacramento County for check fraud. Both arrestees declined to provide their city of residence, police said.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to the Palo Alto Police Department's 24-hour dispatch center at 650-329-2413. Anonymous tips can be e-mailed to paloalto@tipnow.org or sent by text message or voice mail to 650-383-8984. ■

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

SENIOR SCAMS

continued from page 1

Manager George Rodericks have formed a standing committee to participate in San Mateo County Age-Friendly Community Task Force. The council approved the standing

committee appointments at a June 21 meeting.

The standing committee will work with the Center for Age Friendly Excellence (CAFE) staff to seek community leaders that have knowledge and care about the issues

of older adults. The county

task force members will meet about once a month for about five months to help CAFE staff recruit older adult focus group members and share news about age-friendly initiatives, according to a staff report.

CAFE staff will conduct the focus groups to determine

unmet needs, assist in developing recommended potential projects and services to address those needs. CAFE provides guidance to task force members toward the selection of data-informed projects. The final reports will be provided to the City Council and the process

will be incorporated into the town's housing element as part of the town's resident outreach and engagement process, according to the staff report. ■

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

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& SUNDAY

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\$10,488,000 | 5 Bd | 8 Bth
1205Johnson.com

3887 LA SELVA DRIVE
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\$3,288,000 | 4 Bd | 3 Bth
3887LaSelva.com

ESTATE SALE

SATURDAY
ONLY

10888 MAGDALENA ROAD
LOS ALTOS HILLS



\$6,988,000 | 5 Bd | 5 Bth
10888MagdalenaRd.com

848 NASH ROAD
LOS ALTOS



\$6,988,000 | 5 Bd | 4.5 Bth
848NashRd.com

📍 861 Newell Place
Palo Alto

🕒 Saturday, July 15
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

SUNDAY
ONLY

1932 EMERSON STREET
PALO ALTO



\$11,650,000 | 6 Bd | 6 Bth
1932EmersonStreet.com

537 THAIN WAY
PALO ALTO



\$1,698,000 | 2 Bd | 2 Bth
537Thain.com

📍 94 Wisteria Way
Atherton

🕒 Sunday, July 16
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

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Challenges And Opportunities With Selling In the Current Real Estate Market

Presented by Michael Repka, Esq., LLM (Taxation)



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FIRE CHIEF

continued from page 5

Firefighting beginnings

Cuschieri, a San Carlos resident since 2000, most recently served as deputy fire chief. He was a cadet with the department in 1993 through a College of San Mateo program. Cuschieri, who grew up in Belmont, went to paramedic school in 1995. He was officially hired by Woodside Fire in 1997.

“I learned everything about Woodside fire and fell in love with this place,” he said. “It’s

a small community and small fire department. Everybody knew each other here; it’s family-oriented.”

Cuschieri said he never thought he’d end up becoming the fire chief.

“You focus on your task at hand,” he said. “I’m a humble person. I always strive to do better.”

He worked up to the ranks for several years and then was promoted to captain in 2007. He became a battalion chief in 2019 and also was put in charge of training.

“The past fire chief invited

me to sit in on the deputy chief meetings and I really got my exposure (to leadership work),” he said.

A family affair

When he says Woodside Fire is family-oriented, he means it. Cuschieri’s son, Brandon Cuschieri, 26, joined the fire department two years ago after getting his bachelor’s degree. His son grew up in the fire house, he said.

“He came home and one day said ‘I don’t want to be a psychologist anymore, I want to be a

firefighter,” the elder Cuschieri said.

New fire code

The fire board is also in the process of making a significant update to its fire code guidelines for the jurisdictions it oversees, which it will review at its July 25 meeting.

New guidelines include requiring a permit for cannabis facilities or operations, high-rise building, and mandating fire sprinklers for certain types of basements.

When required by a fire code official, some addresses may need to be plainly visible from the fire apparatus road at the back of a property, rear parking lots or alleys.

To help educate residents and provide an opportunity for public comment, the Portola Valley Wildfire Preparedness Committee will discuss the changes at its Wednesday, July 19, meeting, which takes place at 4 p.m. It should review it again in August.

Firefighter health

The Woodside department is also beginning to focus on firefighter health and safety, Cuschieri said. There are obvious dangers associated with the profession, but firefighters also face mental health challenges and higher cancer rates. Firefighters have a 9% higher risk of developing cancer and 14% greater chance of dying from cancer compared to the general public, according to a 2022 report from U.S. Fire Administration. Suicide rates are also higher among firefighters, according to the FEMA entity.

The department brings in a counselor once a year to cover how to deal with emotions and where to go for help, Cuschieri said.

New stations

The department is in the midst of remodeling Fire Station 8 at 135 Portola Road in Portola Valley, which is expected to be complete in August.

Kitchen work is expected to be completed this week and concrete is being poured to get the driveways ready, Cuschieri said.

It is also rebuilding Fire Station 7 at 3111 Woodside Road in Woodside, a project 10 years in the making, which should be done in November. It was originally planned to be finished in July.

He said the framing is complete and the electrical work is wrapping up. They’re installing elevators, too.

“It’s really coming together fast,” he said. “Rain delays (this winter) set us back quite a bit.”



Courtesy Tom Cuschieri
Tom Cuschieri in 2014.



Courtesy Tom Cuschieri
Woodside Fire Protection Chief Tom Cuschieri in December 2022.

The fire department expects to move out of the temporary fire station at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center (SLAC) site on Sand Hill Road by Christmas, he said.

Other resources

To find out when the free wood-chipper program is coming to neighborhoods in the Woodside Fire Protection District, go to woodsidefire.org/prevention/chipper-program.

Through the program, which runs from May to October, district residents may place brush and tree branches less than 8 inches in diameter, piled in neat stacks next to the road, with piles less than 10 feet high or wide and with cut ends facing the road. Eucalyptus and poison oak are not allowed, nor is wood embedded with nails or screws. ■

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



Town of Atherton

Town Administrative Offices
80 Fair Oaks Lane, Atherton, California 94027
650-752-0500

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the **Atherton Planning Commission** will hold a public hearing to consider the projects as listed below during their regular meeting.

This meeting will be held in-person and via teleconference pursuant to Government Code section 54953(e) to provide the safest environment for staff and the public while allowing for public participation. The public may participate in the Planning Commission Meeting via Zoom Meeting or by attending in-person in the Council Chambers at 80 Fair Oaks Lane, Atherton, CA 94027.

<p>Town of Atherton is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.</p> <p>Topic: Atherton Planning Commission Regular Meeting</p> <p>Time: July 26, 2023, 06:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)</p> <p>Join Zoom Meeting https://ci-atherton-ca.zoom.us/j/84150249099</p> <p>Meeting ID: 841 5024 9099</p> <p>One tap mobile +13017158592,,84150249099# US (Washington DC)</p>	<p>+13052241968,,84150249099# US</p> <p>Find your local number: https://ci-atherton-ca.zoom.us/j/kgJcVN4cq</p> <p>Remote Public Comments: Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. The following email will be monitored during the meeting and public comments received will be read into the record.</p> <p>Email: skwon@ci.atherton.ca.us</p>
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Projects under Public Hearing:

A. Tree Protection Zone Exception for four heritage trees ranging from 5.75 times to 9.60 times (5.75x-9.60x) the trees diameter for the installation of a new shade trellis and BBQ, and the demolition of a cabana, pool, and existing paving at **183 Patricia Drive**, zoned R1-A (APN 059-283-020 / Permit PTPZ23-00004)

CEQA: The proposal has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to CEQA Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land

B. Tree Protection Zone Exception for two trees (#5 Canary Island Pine and #14 Coast live Oak) at 7x times the tree diameter for the construction of a proposed main house at **29 Stockbridge Ave.**, zoned R1-A (APN 059-311-110 / Permit PTPZ23-00005)

CEQA: The proposal has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to CEQA Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land

C. Tree Protection Zone Exception for two heritage oak trees for a proposed 1,200 Sq. ft., detached ADU as part of a new proposed main house at **35 Isabella Ave.**, zones R1-A (APN 070-250-240 / Permit PTPZ23-00006)

CEQA: The proposal has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) to CEQA Section 15304, Minor Alterations to Land

A copy of the Planning Commission staff report and application materials can be found online, by **Friday, July 21st, 2023**, here: <https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/641/Agendas-Minutes>

NOTICE IS FURTHER GIVEN that said application is set for hearing by the Planning Commission at its meeting on **July 26, 2023, at 6:00 PM** in-person and via teleconference accessible through the above-described information, at which time and place all persons interested may participate and show cause, if they have any, why the projects listed in the public hearing section should or should not be approved.

IF YOU CHALLENGE the listed projects in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the Planning Commission at, or prior to, the public hearing.

Planning Commission decisions are appealable by any aggrieved person to the City Council within 10 days of the date of the decision. If you have any questions on the item please contact If you have any questions on the item please contact Radha Hayagreev, Senior Planner, (408) 796-4370 at rhayagreev@ci.atherton.ca.us or directly to the Planning Commission at planningcommission@ci.atherton.ca.us

Any attendee who wishes accommodation for a disability should contact the Building Division at (650) 752-0542 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

ATHERTON PLANNING COMMISSION
/s/ Radha Hayagreev
Radha Hayagreev, Consulting Senior Planner

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Eugene D. Sharp, 91, a Palo Alto resident who grew up on an apricot orchard in Mountain View, served in the U.S. Air Force, earned a doctorate in electrical engineering from Stanford University and worked at SRI in Menlo Park and as vice president of technology for TCI, on June 10.

Marjorie Jane Wusthof, 95, a Palo Alto resident who was born in Elk, Calif. and loved her dogs and the ocean, on July 8.

Theodore "Ted" Lee, 61, was born in Palo Alto and grew up in Portola Valley, had a varied career that included accounting, driving a taxi, working at Regency Video and Cache Creek Casino, and

was an amateur sports photographer, on June 21.

Tay Gallagher, 100, a Palo Alto resident who was born in Green Bay, Wis. and loved the Packers, See's Candy and her faith, raised six children and was active in the Palo Alto community, on June 24.

Jenna Lynn Hilleary, 39, a Palo Alto resident and graduate of USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism who worked as a media planner and project manager for tech startups and advertising companies, and volunteered at local organizations including Ronald McDonald House, on June 20.

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

Public Notices

CONTRACTORS GIFT BOX
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-294499

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Contractors Gift Box, located at 530 Oak Grove Avenue, Suite 101A, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Registered owner(s):
ANTONIO NOLASCO
252 Hedge Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
CYNTHIA J NOLASCO
252 Hedge Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025

This business is conducted by: a Married Couple.

Registrant has not yet commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on June 02 2023.
(ALM Jun 23, 30, Jul 7 and 14, 2023)

CTG SALON
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-294698

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) CTG Salon, located at 1176 Valota Road. Redwood City, CA 94061.

Registered owner(s):
DAMN YOUR EYES LLC
1176 Valota Road
Redwood City, CA 94061
CA

This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 10/15/2013
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on June 29 2023.
(ALM Jul 14, 21, 28 and Aug 4, 2023)

HYPATIA'S CUISINE
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-294660

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) Hypatia's Cuisine, located at 2561 El Camino Real Redwood City, CA 94063.

Registered owner(s):
MILENE HYPATIA HANNER
655 Oak Grove Ave 668
Menlo Park, CA 94026

This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on June 26 2023.
(ALM Jul 7, 14, 21 and 28, 2023)

IN YOUR PLACE PET AND HOUSE SITTING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-294597

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) In Your Place Pet and House Sitting, located at 3639 Haven Ave C321, Menlo Park, CA 94025, San Mateo County.

Registered owner(s):
GINA MARIE GREGA
3639 Haven Ave C321
Menlo Park, CA 94025

This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on June 15, 2023.
(ALM Jun 23, 30, Jul 7 and 14, 2023)

LRFA, LLC
NOSTERRA INVESTMENTS, LLC
4-GOOD VENTURES, LLC
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
File No.: M-294657

The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) LRFA, LLC, 2.) NosTerra Investments, LLC, 3.) 4-Good Ventures, LLC, located at 217 Camino Al Lago, Atherton, CA 94027, San Mateo County

Registered owner(s):
WFI INVESTMENTS, LLC
217 Camino Al Lago
Atherton, CA 94027
Delaware

This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
Registrant has not yet commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on June 26 2023.
(ALM Jul 14, 21, 28 and Aug 4, 2023)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.

- Fictitious Business Name
- Abandonment of Fictitious Business Name
- Name Change
- Partnership Withdrawal or Dissolution
- Petition to Administer Estate - Probate Hearing
- Notice of Bulk Sale
- Legal Summons
- Trustee Sale

The deadline is Sunday at 11:59 pm.
Visit AlmanacNews.com/legal_notices/
For assistance email LegalNotices@AlmanacNews.com.

TOWN OF WOODSIDE
2955 WOODSIDE ROAD
WOODSIDE, CA 94062

PLANNING COMMISSION
JULY 26, 2023 6:00 PM

Teleconference Location:

Commissioner Lyle Weaver - Teleconferencing from 5454 Ka Haku Road, Puu Poa Condos, Unit 209, Princeville, Hawaii, 96722, United States.

The public may observe and participate in Planning Commission meetings using remote public comment options or attending in person. Planning Commissioners shall attend in person unless remote participation is permitted by law. The Planning Commission may take action on any item listed in the agenda.

Join Zoom Meeting:

One tap mobile
+16699009128,86068472736
+12532158782,86068472736

Dial by your location
+1 669 900 9128
+1 253 215 8782

Meeting ID: 860 6847 2736
Weblink: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86068472736>

Remote Public Comments:

Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. Members of the public participating remotely may comment on items during the hearing.

Email: sharper@woodsidetown.org

PUBLIC HEARING

1. 125 Northridge Lane ASRB2023-0008; XMAX2023-0003; X2DR2023-0001

Leo Li, LeL Design

Planner: Sarah Filipe, Associate Planner

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of an application for Formal Design Review (**ASRB2023-0008**), to demolish an existing single-family residence, detached garage, swimming pool, and accessory structures; and, construct a new multi-level single-family residence with a partial basement, attached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU), attached garage, swimming pool, tennis court, shed, and associated site improvements; a Maximum Residence Size Exception (**XMAX2023-0003**) to exceed 4,000 square feet; and, a Second Driveway Exception (**X2DR2023-0001**) to relocate an existing second driveway.

The project is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15303(a), which includes a single-family residence and Section 15303(e), which includes accessory structures.

2. 153/155 Marva Oaks Drive

File No. LLAJ2022-0001; VARI2022-0009; GPCD2023-0001; EASE2023-0002; CEQA2022-0002

Robert Falkenburg

Planner: Sage Schaan, Planning Director

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of a Lot Line Adjustment (LLA) between 153 and 155 Marva Oaks Drive (**LLAJ2022-0001**) primarily to locate an existing tennis court onto 155 Marva Oaks Drive that is already USED BY 155 Marva Oaks Drive under an existing private easement. By moving the lot line and formally moving the tennis court onto 155 Marva Oaks Drive and removing the private easement, approval of a Variance to the maximum allowable Paved Area and Surface Coverage for 155 Marva Oaks Drive is required (**VARI2022-0009**) along with the extinguishment of a previously granted Paved Area Variance for 153 Marva Oaks Drive (VAR2003-002). The proposed project includes an abandonment of a trail easement that is not in use in favor of retaining a trail easement that is currently in use leading to the same destination. The Planning Commission shall determine if the easement abandonment is consistent with the General Plan (**GPCD2023-0001**) and provide a recommendation to the Town Council on the proposed easement abandonment (**EASE2023-0002**).

The project is not exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) since the gross average slope of both properties combined exceeds 20%; therefore, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was prepared and circulated for public review between June 12, 2023, to July 11, 2023, in accordance with CEQA. The Planning Commission shall take action on the MND (**CEQA2022-0002**) prior to taking action on the entitlements described for the project.

3. 387 Moore Road

PCDR2023-0001; GRAD2023-0002

Cesar Vitari

Planner: Melanie Olson, Assistant Planner

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of an application for Planning Commission Design Review (**PCDR2023-0001**), of project changes for a previously approved project (ASRB2018-0029) to construct a new two-story, single-family residence exceeding 6,000 square feet (XMAX2018-0013), attached Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU), pool, driveway and other site improvements. The revised project requires Planning Commission approval of a Grading Exception (**GRAD2023-0002**) to exceed 1,500 cubic yards of Site Grading.

The project is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15303(a), which includes a single-family residence and Section 15303(e), which includes accessory structures.

4. 30 Echo Lane

VARI2023-0003

David Becker

Planner: Sarah Filipe, Associate Planner

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of an application for A Variance (**VARI2023-0003**) to allow a fire suppression water storage tank to be located within the required front and side yard setbacks to serve a previously approved new residence that is under construction.

The project is Categorically Exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15303(e), which includes accessory structures.

THE APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW BY CONTACTING SARAH FILIPE AT SFILIFE@WOODSIDETOEN.ORG, SAGE SCHAAN AT SSCHAAN@WOODSIDETOEN.ORG, OR MELAINE OLSON AT MOLSON@WOODSIDETOWN.ORG.

Facing a budget shortfall, Menlo Park pursues three new tax options to boost city revenue

By Cameron Rebosio

Taxes on businesses, hotel guests or residents' utility bills are under consideration as the Menlo Park City Council looked for ways to boost revenue at a July 11 meeting. The city is facing a shortfall of \$1 million in the current budget year, and council members want to avoid depleting the city's fiscal reserves to make ends meet.

Offered a range of options by city staff, the council favored moving forward with a utility users tax (UUT), a business license tax and a transient occupancy tax (TOT), also known as a hotel tax.

The city is currently facing a loss of revenue from its prior UUT, thanks to a class-action lawsuit. Menlo Park for several years failed to make the necessary findings to continue

collecting UUT from residents, according to a San Mateo County Superior Court judge who issued a tentative ruling against the city in April. The city estimates that it will owe \$4.5 million in refunds to residents who paid the tax during those years.

Council members were not in lockstep on the idea of levying a new tax.

"I do not support increasing taxes for residents in Menlo Park period," Council member Cecilia Taylor said. "We adopted a budget ... \$74 million last week. And so I'm just thinking that we need to do more around looking at how we spend money

as opposed to how to generate more money."

All of the council members agreed that city staff should look into a utility users, business and hotel tax. Menlo Park's TOT is one of the lowest in San Mateo County, at only 12%, and the city is considering an increase of between 1% and 3.5%, to bring it in line with other Bay Area cities' hotel taxes. The revenue from the higher hotel tax could bring in an additional \$875,000 to \$3 million annually, according to a June 13 staff report.

The city's business tax was set in 1978, and has not been modified since. Council members put

emphasis on protecting small business owners and applying the tax to businesses with a yet-to-be determined number of employees.

"I definitely would like to look at protecting retail and small businesses who do not have much profit margin," Council member Drew Combs said.

The City Council directed city staff to study the UUT and TOT to go before voters on a future ballot, and to pursue a conversation about changes to the business tax later. ■

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

Robert Edward Mueller

November 14, 1928 – July 2, 2023

Robert Edward Mueller, born November 14, 1928, in Oakland, California, passed away July 2, 2023, at the age of 94.

A dentist by profession, he was perhaps better known as a master chef, accomplished pianist, singer, and actor, and handyman extraordinaire.

In 1945, at the age of 16, Bob entered Stanford University, studying a wide range of subjects, including science, which would become a life-long passion. After graduation, he embarked on the first of many overseas adventures. He loved to reminisce about traveling from New York to London on a Dutch passenger ship, where he and other young people aboard found a little-used room with a piano. There they would spend their evenings, forging lasting friendships, as Bob played the piano as they all sang the songs of the day. Upon arriving in England, he bought an Ambassador motorcycle to explore postwar Europe on the cheap.

When he returned to California, he pursued dentistry at UCSF, and then joined a dental practice in San Jose.

Bob embarked on another sort of adventure in 1961 — the theater. In his first theater production, "Sing Out, Sweet Land", he was thrilled to be directed by the legendary Lilian Fontaine, mother of Olivia de Havilland and Joan Fontaine. Many other productions followed, including being a part of the Woodside Players. His last acting gig was Foothill College's production of "Kiss Me Kate".

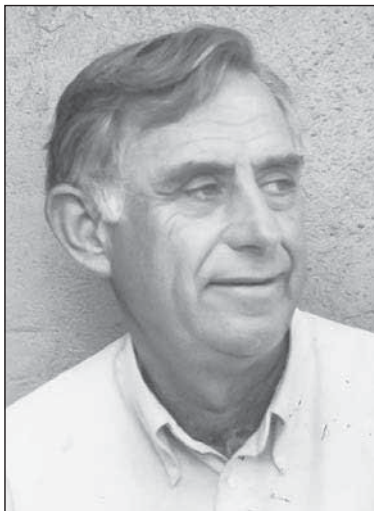
In 1963, he married Margaret Mary Murphy, born and raised in Dublin, Ireland. Together they had three children, twins Gordon and Declan and daughter Megan.

After the death of his first wife, Bob married Kathleen Pogue Van Rheenen Mueller in 1978, blending his family with Kathy and her three children, Brian, Erin and Derek Van Rheenen.

Bob and Kathy loved to travel, including journeys such as walking tours of Italy, France, and Nova Scotia, African Safaris, ski excursions, and beach holidays.

Bob is survived by his loving wife of 45 years, Kathleen Pogue Van Rheenen Mueller, his devoted sister, Mary Lou Mueller Dorking, his children, Gordon and Declan Mueller, and Megan (Drew) Damici; his three step-children, whom he considered his own: Brian Van Rheenen (Susan), Erin Van Rheenen (David Webster Smith) and Derek Van Rheenen (Vincent O'Connell); his grandchildren, Angelina and Anthony Damici, and Lauren and Shelby Van Rheenen; and his great-granddaughter, Bodie Flynn Thomas. All of his family, as well as his beloved cat, Shadow, miss him terribly.

In lieu of flowers, the family hopes that you will treasure those close to you.



PAID OBITUARY

BUDGETS

continued from page 5

according to a June 21 council meeting agenda packet. The majority of the town's revenue, around \$15 million, comes from property taxes. The City Council approved the budget at the June meeting.

"With the completion of the Town Center, focus is shifting to other capital projects needs in the town," said City Manager George Rodericks in a June 21 staff report.

Notably, the Planning Department budget increased by about \$888,000 because of a new town planning services consultant and one-time programmatic expenditures related to the various general plan updates, such as the state-mandated safety element and housing element, and associated zoning code updates.

The anticipated increase in the planning department operating budget includes a \$426,000 increase for contract planner hours and a \$456,000 increase of one-time costs for housing element updates, including environmental reviews, objective design standards, general plan safety update and modifications to the accessory dwelling unit (ADU) ordinance and implementation program.

Priorities this fiscal year include updates to Holbrook-Palmer Park and traffic safety improvement projects.

Priorities in the coming years include working on projects in the town's bicycle and pedestrian master plan, drainage improvement plans, along with green infrastructure within road and maintenance projects. Some \$1.9 million will go toward traffic safety improvements; \$1.3 million to the bicycle and pedestrian program; \$1.6 million for road

maintenance; \$3.3 million for drainage improvements; and \$300,000 for park improvements.

The police department budget will decrease by about \$240,000, due to some retirements.

The council has also discussed park playground improvements, increasing the 2024-25 look ahead budget from \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Woodside focuses attention on fixing roads and fire mitigation

Woodside is estimated to bring in general fund revenues of \$11.2 million in 2023-24. Expenditures are projected to come in at \$10.9 million, according to the budget approved in June.

Emergency response to the winter storms cost the town \$400,000 during the 2022 fiscal year and led to the temporary closure of Highway 84 between Portola Road and Fox Hill Road. Winter storm repairs cost \$300,000 last fiscal year and are expected to cost the town \$80,000 this fiscal year. The town received about \$660,000 for a FEMA hazard mitigation grant.

The road closure has put an additional burden on the town's streets, most notably Old La Honda Road, said Town Manager Kevin Bryant. The town is also grappling with planning for state-mandated housing over the next eight years.

"These major challenges remind us that Woodside is not an island and that external forces will have an impact on what we do locally," he wrote in a June 7 memo. "It is important that we do our very best on behalf of the residents and businesses of the town to keep Woodside the oasis within the Bay Area that it has long been."

The town's Planning

Department has three major projects in the docket: getting its housing element certified by the state, updating its town center area plan and identifying hurdles to development in the Western Hills neighborhood. The last project will employ the lessons learned from a similar project previously completed in the Glens neighborhood.

The town spent a significant amount of money — \$325,000 — during the last fiscal year on housing and town center plans. It expects to spend less, \$200,000, during the 2023 year, and \$100,000 during the 2024 year.

Property taxes are expected to bring in an additional roughly \$300,000 from the 2022 year.

Bryant recommended the creation of two new positions to address compliance with state regulations: a second senior management analyst and a records manager.

Fire mitigation is also part of the town's budget.

New this year is for funding for a grant writer position (\$30,000 for the 2023 and 2024 fiscal years) that will be funded by the towns of Woodside and Portola Valley, and the Woodside Fire Protection District to seek out additional opportunities for wildfire preparation.

The proposed budget includes \$350,000 in each of the next two fiscal years to fund a program that reimburses property owners up to \$3,000 for fire fuel load reduction and/or specific home hardening activities on their property.

The state can provide around \$660,000 to support about \$880,000 of hazardous tree removal within the town. ■

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

SFO's four-legged Wag Brigade makes airport layovers a whole lot cuter

Friendly dogs, Alex the Flemish Giant rabbit and LiLou the pig offer cuddles to harried travelers

By Julia Gentin

Recently, my family and I found ourselves wandering San Francisco International Airport in search of activities to fill a four and a half hour delay on our flight to Chicago when we came across a Pride event, held fittingly at the Harvey Milk Terminal. A golden retriever named Brixton was nestled between drag queens, and he was decked out in Pride attire from head to toe: rainbow sombrero, rainbow sunglasses, rainbow bandana and rainbow armbands.

Beneath the bandana, Brixton wore a vest embroidered with the words "Pet Me!" Brixton is a member of the SFO Wag Brigade, selected for his temperament and ability to adjust to various environments through the Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) program at the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). Brixton and around 20 other dogs, a Flemish Giant rabbit, a cat and even a pig are available for hugs and pictures around the airport. The human volunteers distribute Wag Brigade collectible trading cards, personalized for each animal.

As SFO air travel is approaching pre-pandemic levels — 14.9 million travelers are expected between Memorial Day and Labor Day, which represents about 85% of summer travel levels in 2019, according to an SFO press release — and extreme weather events have led to increased cancellations and delays at airports this summer, the Wag Brigade is there to "shift the mood," said Jennifer Kazarian, the program's founder and a member of SFO's customer care team.

"Most of them are like

celebrities walking in the airport. You can see people's heads spinning and taking double takes," Kazarian said. But once travelers actually approach the animals, "they bring strangers together ... because dogs are something they have in common."

Meeting Luna and Noodles

Upon exiting security on a Wednesday morning in late June, I met Luna, a 2-year-old, 10-pound Italian greyhound wearing a ruffled, leopard-print skirt. Luna is the first Italian greyhound in the SPCA's program. Her enthusiastic demeanor is an outlier for the generally shy and aloof breed, said Leslie Kim, Luna's owner and San Francisco resident. Luna also competes in dog sports, with a personal record of 8.26 seconds for the 100-yard dash, a time that dogs much bigger than her have trouble running, Kim said.

Soon after we were joined by Noodles, a 3-year-old, 98-pound goldendoodle. San Carlos resident Sharon Spina is Noodles' owner and described her dog as Will Ferrell from "Elf" reincarnated, with a superpower of big fluffy hugs.

I followed the dogs and their owners, who are volunteers with full-time jobs, Kim as a personal trainer and Spina at a logistics company, as they made their way through Terminals 2 and 3. Dozens of separate interactions included a group of teen girls traveling to Disneyland, a couple with three dogs going to Vancouver and a family en-route to Washington, D.C., who didn't own a dog but really wanted one. All were stuck at the airport due to delayed or canceled flights, but they immediately cheered up after a visit from the dogs. Even a crying

baby who didn't have much experience with dogs, according to her mother, stopped crying and smiled as she pet Luna.

The science and history behind therapy animals

Pointing to the interaction between Luna and the baby, Kazarian said there is evidence that interactions with animals lead to better moods.

"Petting a dog is proven to increase endorphins and make people happy. When one person is happy, they smile, and when one person smiles, everybody starts to smile," Kazarian said. The Wag Brigade is especially meaningful for those who have recently lost pets and airport employees who can't have pets due to the travel demands of their jobs, she said.

Research from University of California at Los Angeles Health shows that the body's response to petting a dog has positive health implications for immunity, physical pain, blood pressure and heart health. Petting an animal releases serotonin, prolactin and oxytocin, hormones that play a role in elevating mood.

The history of animal assisted therapy (AAT) dates back centuries. In Belgium, animals were incorporated into treatment for individuals with disabilities as early as the ninth century, according to UCLA research. The SPCA founded the oldest humane society-based AAT program in 1981, according to its website.

AAT animals are different from service animals and emotional support animals, according to the American Kennel Club. Service animals are individually trained, task-oriented and work with people with disabilities. Emotional support animals are not necessarily trained but also work with an individual who goes through a mental health screening prior to being approved. And therapy animals, like the ones in the Wag Brigade, volunteer with many people in many different settings and are trained to be comfortable in each environment.

The first airport AAT program started at San Jose Mineta International Airport after 9/11. Kathryn Liebschutz, an airport chaplain, brought her trained therapy dog to work to alleviate travelers' increased air

travel anxiety. Los Angeles International Airport became the second airport to launch an AAT program, called Pets Unstressing Passengers (PUP), in April 2013. Kazarian was tasked with creating a similar structure at SFO, and her 6-pound Yorkie, Dino, became the first member of the Wag Brigade in December 2013. At its maximum, the Wag Brigade has staffed 36 to 38 animals, but the priority is "quality over quantity," Kazarian said.

LiLou, a pig named after her owner's favorite movie character in "The Fifth Element," became the first pig trained through the SPCA program in 2016. Her owner adopted her as a piglet, and she lives in a high-rise apartment in San Francisco. Kazarian said that there is a big crowd when LiLou comes glammed up with fancy outfits and painted nails as she plays the piano and demonstrates her favorite tricks.

How the Wag Brigade works

To join AAT, animals must be at least 1 year old, with a certification from at least one obedience course. They also must go through a behavior screening, and dogs must attain their Canine Good Citizen certification. If they are approved for AAT, they have to volunteer through SPCA for six months to a year before auditioning for the Wag Brigade. Volunteering locations include hospitals, schools and reading programs. Less than 10% of animal applicants make it onto the Wag Brigade because of the unpredictability of airports and prevalence of food in the terminals, Kazarian said.

After animals are accepted into SFO's program, Kazarian gives them a tour around the executive offices. The next visit, the animals do a shorter session pre-security to make sure they are still comfortable in the airport setting. Kazarian stays with them and trains them for the next few visits. From there, once the animals are off on their own, Kazarian is available for any questions and accompanies them as requested, with check-ins every six weeks, she said.

"Usually with the schools or hospitals they visit, they are seeing children and patients on a regular basis," Kazarian said. "But in an airport, there is a lot of fast-paced turnover ... no two days of interactions will ever be the same."

Animals work a two-hour shift, which is equivalent to an eight-hour human shift, according to Kazarian. She doesn't post a schedule because

the animals are often stopped by travelers along the security process, and it's difficult to pinpoint an exact place and time to meet them.

"I get requests through Instagram, saying 'I'm in Terminal One. Can you bring the rabbit or the cat over right now?'" she said. "But they're pets. They live with their humans and they come to the airport to volunteer. People get confused."

'He was meant for this job'

The animals love their job, said Kim, Luna's owner. But training Luna as a therapy dog "happened randomly."

When Luna was 2 months old, Kim sprained her ankle. It was during the holidays, and she was worried that no one would be around to help her with the dog.

"But Luna just laid there with her head on my elevated foot and calmed down completely," Kim said. "That's when I was thinking, 'I wonder if you would be a good therapy dog.'"

Soon after, Kim started the AAT training process.

Spina, Noodles' owner, saw how good he was with the children at a nearby elementary school, who would shower him with hugs and kisses.

"He loves kids and people," Spina said. "He was meant for this job."

Noodles is always a few steps ahead of Spina, greeting a new traveler with his tail wagging. A traveler whose flight to Mexico City was delayed offered to take him with her as he calmed down and laid at her feet after being showered with hugs. Noodles, who also volunteers at colleges and hospitals, has a hard time making it out of the airport because of all of the people he "meets and greets," Spina said.

The bonds within the Wag Brigade extend past its meet-and-greets in the airport, with barbecues outside the terminals, dog birthday parties and quarterly "yappy hours" for those who are curious about joining the program.

"Our volunteers have all become friends with each other ... it's like a family," Kazarian said. "It's a really special program ... The (volunteers) are all here to make people happy, and it's a win-win for them because it's a positive experience when they come to the airport."

For more information on the Wag Brigade, including how to follow members on Instagram, visit SFO's website at flysf.com. ■

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Courtesy Jennifer Kazarian

Airport employees and families greet LiLou, San Francisco International Airport's first therapy pig.

RALLY

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Nina Chuang, who organized the July 5 gathering, said many of her friends and fellow students had endured so much to get a college degree.

“Some of them took out loans to get that piece of paper ... (and) for their families to overcome these systemic cycles of poverty and dangerous racism,” she said. “These rulings directly affect our livelihood, our bank accounts, our futures, our children.”

Salma Pacheco, a Sacramento State alumna, said the Supreme Court made a decision that won't impact its members. But she called out Justice Clarence Thomas, who benefited from affirmative action.

“So why is he denying that same privilege to other students?” she asked.

“I am tired. I am tired of having to fight for the same thing as generations before me,” she said.

The students also received support from prominent members of the Asian American community.

“It is legalized discrimination,” said Connie Young Yu, a Chinese American writer, historian and lecturer. “The majority opinion of the highest court is in the tradition of this discrimination. It keeps us all unsafe and unwell.”

The court's decision was “a call to action,” said Susan Hayase, a longtime activist and a founder of San Jose Nikkei Resisters, a grassroots organization that mobilizes the Japanese American community in San Jose.

“The Supreme Court's majority has been trying to roll back decades of hard-fought, hard-won progress for justice and equality. But they won't stop us — what we have been doing — in fighting for a multiracial democracy in this country,” she said.

Weighing in on the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action, a panel of Stanford Law School professors said on June 30 that the ruling in favor of the Students for Fair Admissions is a case that comes along once in a generation.

It will have profound impacts on the way admissions will be conducted in higher education.

The Stanford Law panelist, who said their opinions were their own and not associated with the Law School and Stanford University, said the court's ruling could open the door to additional litigation as universities and colleges seek ways to admit a diverse population of students while still not violating the court's decision.

Yet, rather than a death knell, some panelists held out hope that the ruling would create



Sue Dremann

Shawki Moore, former Associated Students President at San Diego State University, spoke at the Stanford University July 5 rally against the Supreme Court's affirmative action ruling.

a rethinking of how diversity could be achieved. The ruling could force universities to reconsider their policies on “legacy” admissions of the children of alumni and athletic recruitment, which are inherently racist, and instead make more spaces available to students of color who are better academically qualified and who come from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds, they said.

A primer on the case law

Ralph Richard Banks, faculty director of the Stanford Center for Racial Justice, moderated the panel discussion. He outlined the case law that led to the court's recent decision.

The court first issued a ruling on the merits of affirmative action in 1978 in the Bakke decision. Allan Bakke was a white engineer who applied for admission to medical school at the University of California Davis and was rejected twice — in 1973 and 1974. He filed a lawsuit against the university's admissions policy, which had a quota for students of disadvantaged racial groups.

When the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, the justices were divided. Four justices would have struck down the university's policy and ruled for Bakke based on Title 6, a federal statutory provision or the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A different group of four justices would have upheld the affirmative action policy under the Constitution because it was an effort to undermine the racial hierarchy in society, Banks said.

Justice Lewis Powell Jr., the court's ninth member and tie-breaker, voted with the conservative justices to strike down the UC Davis admissions policy. But the court said race-based affirmative action could be applied more generally if its structure employed a holistic consideration of individual applicants who might demonstrate their

experiences of coming from race-based disadvantaged backgrounds or discrimination.

Twenty-five years after Bakke, the court took up two challenges to affirmative action at the University of Michigan's law school and undergraduate school in the landmark Grutter versus Bollinger case. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor was the swing vote in the Michigan cases, which upheld the law school's policy but struck down the undergraduate school's admissions in 2003.

O'Connor questioned the legitimacy of an open-ended affirmative action policy. There must be an end point to the consideration of race, she said.

“It has been 25 years since Justice Powell first approved affirmative action. We expect that 25 years from now the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary,” O'Connor wrote.

The justices' reasonings

Whether that was a rhetorical flourish or a doctrinal line in the sand remains open to debate, but Chief Justice John Roberts, in the recent Students for Fair Admissions case, saw it as a doctrinal line in the sand; the universities hadn't been able to articulate an end point, Easha Anand, assistant professor and co-director of the law school's Supreme Court Litigation Clinic, said.

Earlier landmark cases found there can be no “separate but equal” because treating the races differently inherently means inequality, she said.

“The core of (the landmark) Brown versus the Board of Education, the seminal Supreme Court case, says eliminating racial discrimination means eliminating all of it,” she said.

In his Students for Fair Admissions case opinion, Justice Neil Gorsuch said the dictionary meaning of words as the public knows them rather than what Congress intended is how

statutes should be interpreted, and it's clear that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits any use of race, said Richard Thompson Ford, professor of law.

“Affirmative action is the consideration of race” in Gorsuch's view, Ford noted.

Similarly, Gorsuch's opinion in a sexual discrimination case, Bostock versus Clayton County, found that same language in Title VII, which says that discrimination based on sex is unlawful.

“There's no way of considering the sexual orientation or the gender identity of an individual without also considering their sex,” Ford said that Gorsuch wrote.

Considering race in admissions, under Title VI, which has nearly identical language, would therefore also be unlawful.

But Ford said that opinion didn't take into account systemic bias, which is hard to identify.

Anand said that Justice Roberts also cited case law that states cannot use race as a “stereotype” or a “negative.” College admissions is a zero-sum; college admissions is a plus for some and a minus for another, and race is being used as a negative here, she said the court found.

But Roberts did leave an opening — of sorts.

“So he says, nothing in this opinion would be construed as prohibiting universities from considering an applicant's discussion of race or how it affected his or her life, through discrimination, inspiration or otherwise,” she said. “But he also makes clear that the (college admissions) essay can sort of play what he calls a ‘stealth’ role in undermining the opinion. That is, it can't just be about telegraphing race in another way.”

Anand said that opinion creates a conundrum for admissions offices.

“What does that mean? What does that allow universities to do? And how much does it require universities to change the framework they've been adhering to since the days of Grutter and Bakke?”

“What makes me nervous is the next frontier on this slate of challenges, which seem to suggest that any consideration of increasing diversity, even if you find a race-neutral way to do it, will be the subject of litigation,” she said.

Anand said that the ruling will end up making a class that is far whiter by eliminating a critical tool from the admissions offices' arsenals. The line between giving special consideration to an application because of the race of the applicant and giving special consideration to an applicant because the applicant faced hardship is inextricably intertwined with race, and it will lead to more

litigation as plaintiffs argue it violates the court's decision.

But Michael McConnell, director of the Constitutional Law Center, said he didn't think that the plaintiffs in those cases would to succeed.

“There's no hint in the majority opinion that the motive of diversity is an illegal motive,” he said.

Universities “should look to see whether the school that the applicant is coming from is one of these catastrophically underperforming public schools, and any student who excels and is coming from those schools, I think, should get a very significant boost,” he said.

Forcing universities' self-examination

Universities must also look at their own racist policies that have led to limited admission slots for students of color.

Banks said that legacy admissions practices or the athletic recruitment practices were clearly developed out of racial animus as an effort to keep Jews out of elite universities about a century ago.

In her dissenting opinion, Justice Sonia Sotomayor seemed to say that what the majority is doing is eliminating affirmative action for Black and brown people but leaving it in place for white people, Banks said. But there might also be challenges to those long-standing policies.

Anand agreed. It is a theme that Justice Thomas brought up, and it has played out in his prior opinions.

“I just think for some of the justices in the majority there's this idea like, ‘Look, this is a problem of your own making. You universities claim to want to admit a diverse class, but then you have to admit all the students who are white and wealthy because you care about athletes and legacies. And then you're reduced to doing this kind of racial balancing on the back end, to make up for the fact that you've just given away half the class slots to students who wouldn't be deserving but (who) further whiteness. And well, we're not going to let you use this racial balancing on the back end to make up for your racism on the front end,’” she said.

“So I think that this kind of backdrop of legacies and athletes is doing a lot of work for both the majority and the dissent. But they draw starkly different conclusions from the fact that university admissions policies do prioritize,” she said.

The full panel discussion can be found at YouTube.com. ■

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ADA LAWSUITS

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Committee on May 2, Han drove to Sacramento to speak in support.

“I’m angry at a law firm (Potter Handy) that preys on immigrants, that preys on hard workers who are just trying to make a living for their families,” Han said before the committee. “And they know that most of us have never dealt with the law before, so with the slightest pressure everyone wants to settle, and the settlement is their business.”

The American Immigration Council estimates that 38% of all business owners in California and 53% of business owners in the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara metro area were immigrants in 2018.

Niello argued that giving businesses extended periods of time to fix ADA violations would be more effective at actually improving accessibility than relying on lawsuits to do the bulk of enforcement, given that many lawsuits end in settlements.

“SB 585 would ensure that the deficiencies are actually fixed, access is increased and all can enjoy the business. If they don’t, they’ll be penalized and face damages,” he said.

Settlements do not necessarily ensure that businesses in violation of the ADA fix those violations. If a business promises to fix a violation but does not, the original plaintiff would need to file a new lawsuit, Autumn Elliott, litigation counsel for Disability Rights California, said in an email to the Palo Alto Weekly.

“Requiring notice and cure periods treat disabled people as second class citizens by forcing them to jump through additional barriers after being discriminated against,” Eric Harris, director of public policy at Disability Rights California, said before the committee. “In



Small-business owners (from left) Sandy Liu, Stephanie Wansek and Betty Tsai (all photographed by Emma Donnelly-Higgins), Steven Lee (courtesy Celine Trinh) and Gwen Gasque (courtesy Stephanie Wansek) are part of a Peninsula coalition looking for alternative solutions to serial ADA lawsuits.

an effort to help a small number of businesses, the vast majority of disabled people who bring credible claims will be harmed.”

Harris, who uses a wheelchair due to nerve damage, shared his own experience as a disabled person attempting to access public spaces.

“I have spent a lifetime finding out which stores or restaurants or businesses are accessible and which ones are not,” he said. “If I could tell you how embarrassing and hurt I have been when I try to go to a business in 2023 and get told, essentially, ‘No, you do not belong and we do not want you’ — we would not accept that with any other marginalized group.”

The committee passed SB 585 unanimously. The bill was then ordered to the assembly where it was referred to the Assembly Judiciary Committee, leaving business owners wondering if the bill is effectively “dead.”

A representative of Niello’s office said that he will continue to work on the bill next year.

“While SB 585 was held in committee, Senator Niello had a productive conversation with the chair of the Assembly Judiciary Committee on the best way to make progress on the issue and is committed to working on it next year,” Niello’s office said.

As the fight for SB 585 comes to a halt for the moment, business owners are concerned about another bill, AB 1757. The bill would increase web accessibility by requiring websites and mobile applications belonging to business establishments — such as the small businesses in the coalition — to abide by new ADA standards and would also allow individuals with disabilities and businesses to sue third party web developers who create non-compliant products. Disability rights groups have come out in support of the bill, while Han described it as “devastating” for small businesses. The bill is scheduled to go before the Senate Judiciary Committee on July 11.

Education is key

Though they might disagree on what kind of legislative change should take place, disability rights advocates and business owners tend to concur that ADA education, especially for small business owners, is vital.

Elliott pointed to a lack of government oversight regarding the ADA that has left small business owners largely uneducated about their own responsibilities. For example, most businesses do not hire

Certified Access Specialists to inspect their premises for compliance despite the fact that doing so can reduce a business’ liability if they are later found to be in violation of the ADA, Elliott said.

Meanwhile, the significant burden of enforcement is placed on the shoulders of disabled people themselves.

‘I’m angry at a law firm (Potter Handy) that preys on immigrants, that preys on hard workers who are just trying to make a living for their families.’

TONY HAN, TAI PAN
DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS

“Most of the ADA violations out there ... continue to go unchallenged,” Elliott said. “We’ve had the ADA for decades now and still there’s so much non-compliance with the law.”

With its Accessible Business Entrance program, San Francisco sets a positive example for what business owner ADA education should look like, Elliott said. The city also offers grants of

up to \$10,000 to help businesses make changes such as adding accessible furniture, removing mobility barriers and hiring Certified Access Specialists.

Leaders of the small business coalition are working to educate fellow businesses about ADA compliance, and they have hired a Certified Access Specialist to inspect their own businesses at a reduced group rate. Some business owners said that they are more aware of what ADA compliance looks like as a result of fighting the lawsuits and joining the coalition.

“Now I already have an eye for these tables; like now I know how they’re supposed to be tall, how wide and stuff,” Kolchanova said.

In this sense, the business owners are doing exactly what proponents of the ADA want them to: Raising awareness of the law and, as a result, increasing compliance with it.

Other Palo Alto businesses in the coalition include Jing Jing Gourmet, Letter Perfect, Osteria Toscana, Palo Alto Eyes Optometry, Rangoon Ruby Burmese Cuisine, ROOH, Taste, Taverna Restaurant, Wahlburgers and more.

“We met so many great business owners,” Kolchanova said. “I think we got closer to each other.”

Coalition member Rob Fischer, who owns the Palo Alto Creamery and Reposado, echoed what many of his fellow business owners also expressed: that they wanted to serve all customers, and that they do their best to accommodate people with disabilities.

“It’s called hospitality for a reason,” Fischer said. “We bend over backwards to accommodate people.” ■

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315 Fletcher Drive **\$7,195,000**
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Coldwell Banker 650-400-2933

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728 University Street **\$10,500,000**
Sun 1:00-4:00 4BD/6BA
Golden Gate Sotheby’s International Realty 650-485-3476

MENLO PARK

530 Central Ave **\$4,125,000**
Sat/Sun 2:00-4:00 4BD/3.5BA
Compass 650-387-2716

PALO ALTO

537 Thain Way (C) **\$1,597,997**
Sun 1:30-4:30 2BD/2BA
DeLeon Realty 650-900-7000

PALO ALTO

10888 Magdalena Road **\$6,988,000**
Sat 1:30-4:30 5BD/5BA
DeLeon Realty 650-900-7000

1205 Johnson Street **\$10,488,000**

Sat/Sun 1:30-4:30 5BD/8BA
DeLeon Realty 650-900-7000

848 Nash Road **\$6,988,000**

Sat 1:30-4:30 5BD/4.5BA
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1932 Emerson Street **\$11,650,000**

Sun 1:30-4:30 6BD/6BA
DeLeon Realty 650-900-7000

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Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

Magical musical mashup

'And I Love Her' celebrates The Beatles through the lens of the women that inspired them, but with unexpected elements along the way



Courtesy Stanford Live

Steve Hackman has interwoven his longtime love of The Beatles with his classical chops to create "And I Love Her: The Beatles Re-Imagined," a concert that "sees the Beatles through the lens of the women that inspired them."

By Karla Kane

Steve Hackman is many things — a composer, conductor, producer, pianist, vocalist and DJ. He's also a big Beatles fan.

Hackman, who's emerged as a prominent voice on the current classical music scene, first fell in love with the songs and sound of the Fab Four around age 13, when he was introduced to their music by his sister.

"I pretty much became obsessed," he recalled of his history with the Liverpoolian icons.

The Beatles became central to his musical experience as a high-schooler and their work remains important to him to this day.

"It feels like so much a part of me; it's music I know inside out," he said, acknowledging that he shares that feeling with many other fans.

The group's popularity has endured for decades and has influenced countless other musicians over the years. In Hackman's case, he's taken his longtime love of the band and interwoven it with his classical chops to create "And I Love Her: The Beatles Re-Imagined," a concert coming to Stanford's Frost Amphitheater July 16 as part of the Stanford Live Arts Festival.

The production "sees the Beatles through the lens of the women that inspired them," Hackman said, "of their moth-

ers, of their wives, and also the female characters that they created through their music, of which there are so many colorful ones."

At Frost, the show will feature a string quartet and piano alongside guitar, bass and drums, accompanying four vocalists. "The interplay between the classical quartet and band is something I think audiences will really enjoy," he said. "That variation of styles — kind of my trademark — is something I look forward to sharing."

Hackman created the show last summer.

"We were as a country — as we still are — dealing with the rights of women being very much under attack; women were really on my mind," he said.

Female characters loom large in the Beatles canon. Both Paul McCartney and John Lennon lost their mothers at a young age, and those relationships are reflected in the music.

"That had a profound effect on young John and Paul, and it bound them together in this tragic way," Hackman said. "When you look at their songwriting you see the traces of their mothers, evoking them, singing to them so often, most famously of course in 'Let it Be,' and 'Julia.'" The former, sung in "And I Love Her" by Rachel Gonzales, is especially meaningful to Hackman, who includes it in the show as a tribute to his

own mother as well.

The Beatles catalog is also full of romantic love songs, of course, and as Hackman stated, portraits of vivid characters created or paid tribute to by the songwriters. The titular "Lady Madonna," for example, is McCartney's "kind of homage to the miracle of motherhood," inspired by a woman he saw in a magazine. There's "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds," "Dear Prudence," "Michelle," and "the list goes on," he said, naming "Blackbird" as one of his favorites in the production.

"The message of 'Blackbird,' Paul's song that was speaking to the Civil Rights movement in America, it's just as essential as ever," he said.

Looking at cherished favorites from a different point of view has been a gratifying experience, Hackman said.

"It was pretty amazing to sort of be able to — not fall in love again because I'm already in love with them — but reimagine them with this sort of alternative creative impetus in mind that was guiding me," he said.

Hackman is no stranger to the Bay Area. He's conducted for the San Francisco Symphony (and will do so again July 23), and in February brought a smaller-scale production to Stanford Live's Bing Studio, giving local audiences a taste of his unique fusion style.

Over the last decade, the clas-

sically trained Hackman has made it his focus and mission to bring the classical and popular music worlds together, "creating hybrid compositions that synthesize the two in interesting and compelling ways," he said.

What makes one piece of music "classical" and the other "popular?" That question is at the heart of Hackman's approach.

"I just don't see the lines between them. I didn't grow up in a household where music was judged whether it was classical or any other form. I grew up agnostically when it came to music," he said. "I found the more I rose up the ranks in the classical music world and got to the 'elite' level, the more estranged I thought classical music was getting from the music most people were listening to. This has really been my attempt to rectify that and bring them together."

Some of his fusion projects have included "Brahms V. Radiohead," "Tchaikovsky V. Drake," "The Resurrection Mixtape" (Mahler V. Notorious BIG V. Tupac Shakur), and "Beethoven V. Coldplay."

"This music has much more in common than we think. Beethoven was the Beatles of his day," he said. "It's often the marketing, people trying to put things in a box, and oftentimes I think those labels are inaccurate."

There is sometimes the mistaken impression, he said, that

"classical music is complex and full of this virtuosity and technique, and somehow popular music is devoid of this kind of mastery and complexity. The Beatles are an example of how that's not true."

The Beatles, of course, were also mixing pop and rock music with classical influences back in the 1960s. Remember the string arrangement on "Eleanor Rigby" (another memorable female character) or the orchestral majesty of "A Day in the Life." The band's musically adventurous spirit is part of what has always attracted Hackman to it.

"I'm drawn to music that sort of makes its own rules. They quickly figured out through hard work and writing, and just their ingenuity, how to filter their own creativity through all those styles they'd learned," he said. "What you hear is such an authentic voice, it creates a whole new set of rules that then everyone else copies. I think that's what the best music does." ■

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"And I Love Her: The Beatles Re-Imagined" will be performed at Frost Amphitheater, 351 Lasuen St., Stanford, on Sunday, July 16, at 6:30 p.m. Tickets start at \$35. More information is available at live.stanford.edu

Worth a Look



Courtesy RJ Muna

Bolivia Corazón de América will perform as part of the Peninsula International Dance Festival.

Peninsula International Dance Festival

Over 200 dancers representing 13 nationalities will take to the stage at this year's second Peninsula International Dance Festival. The two-day festival is set to highlight a diverse array of local dance and music artists and ensembles, including Amor do Samba, Bolivia Corazón de América, Chitresh Das Institute, Eddie Madril, Feng Ye Dance, Peru Expressions, Theatre Flamenco and more. Organized by the Peninsula Ballet Theater and designed by the company's Artistic Director Gregory Amato, the festival's lineup has also been hand-picked with the consultation of local dancers Zenon Barron, Carlos Carvajal and Charlotte Moraga. This festival promises to bring a colorful display of sacred, social and secular dances to the San Mateo Performing Arts Center.

July 15 at 7 p.m. and July 16 at 3 p.m. at the San Mateo Performing Arts Center, 600 N. Delaware St., San Mateo. Tickets are \$35-\$60. pidfca.org. (AJ)

Bravemaker Film Festival

The Bravemaker Film Festival celebrates films that share stories of justice, diversity and inclusion. Now marking its fifth anniversary, the Redwood City-based festival has, in just a handful of years, steadily grown. Bravemaker will present 62 films over four days at several Redwood City venues, highlighting feature films and shorts, as well as thoughtful panel discussions after screenings, and workshops, conversations and parties with film industry professionals. Though the festival is fully in-person this year, it also offers some select films that audiences can watch at home.

July 13-16 at various venues in downtown Redwood City. Most events are \$10-\$25; festival passes start at \$125. bravemaker.com. (HZ)

Music@Menlo

What makes the music of Beethoven so great? Music@Menlo offers a chance to find out, taking a deep dive into his music through three weeks of up-close concerts, master classes, workshops and conversations. The composer inspired the theme for the 21st annual chamber music festival, "Beethoven Unfolding," which runs July 14-Aug. 5 at Menlo School in Atherton and features top musical talents, as well as up-and-coming young musicians. Audiences will have a chance to enjoy the festival's full roster of seasoned musicians and young artists alike in programs celebrating Beethoven's music, as well as that of the composers who influenced him, and those he influenced. Music@Menlo offers both in-person and streaming options for enjoying a number of the concerts and events.

July 14-Aug. 5 at Menlo School, 50 Valparaiso Ave., Atherton. Some programs are already sold out. For ticket availability and more information, visit musicatmenlo.org. (HZ)

Scary Goldings

Their name may invoke shades of Halloween, but Scary Goldings' sound pops with irrepressible summer grooves. The group gets its unique name from teaming up two powerhouses: the rotating funk band Scary Pockets, led by guitarist Ryan Lerman and multi-instrumentalist Jack Conte, with Grammy-nominated organist Larry Goldings. The ensemble brings its '60s retro jazz and funk to The Guild on July 14. Goldings' fleet-fingered way with the keys melds seamlessly with the Pockets' bluesy, rock-edged guitar and dynamic percussion, smoothed at the edges by further keyboard instruments. Scary Goldings has released four albums since they joined forces in 2018, and they released their new single, "Louis Cole Sucks," last week. The single features legendary guitarist John Scofield, with whom the group has previously collaborated.

July 14, 8 p.m. at The Guild Theatre, 949 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. Tickets are \$31 (\$59 mezzanine seating has a waitlist). guildtheatre.com (HZ)

Mountain View Obon Festival

For the first time since 2019, the Mountain View Buddhist Temple hosts a public Obon festival. The festival remembers loved ones who have passed on with a joyous celebration that includes Taiko drumming and other music, Japanese folk dancing, as well as food and games. This popular Mountain View festival also includes cultural exhibits, tours of the temple, bingo and children's activities.

July 15, 4-10 p.m. and July 16, noon-8 p.m. at Mountain View Buddhist Temple, 575 N. Shoreline Blvd., Mountain View. obon.mvbuddhisttemple.org. (HZ)

Briefs by Akhil Joondeph and Heather Zimmerman.

Cultivating craft and community

Palo Alto Clay and Glass Festival celebrates 30 years

By Akhil Joondeph

For 30 years, local artists and art lovers have flocked to the Palo Alto Art Center every summer for one of the Peninsula's most treasured displays of pottery, sculpture and glass arts. This year's 30th edition of the Clay and Glass Festival promises to carry this tradition forward, cultivating support for talented local creatives and building community between artists and art lovers.

This year's festival, taking place July 15-16, will bring over 100 artists to the Art Center to sell their work, ranging from glass sculptures to glazed ceramic vases.

"The festival will feature artists who enjoy both functional and decorative fine art, from the abstract to the figurative, and from the minimalist to the whimsical" Mari Emori, Association of Clay and Glass Artists of California president, said. "We offer a wide range of artwork so anybody can find something that speaks to them."

The event also will feature interactive demonstrations, where visitors can watch the festival's artists at work and even try out some pottery-making and sculpting techniques themselves.

In 1993, the ACGA under the recommendation of longtime festival supporter and then-Art Center employee Diane Master brought the festival to Palo Alto, after renovations to Golden Gate Park pushed it out of San Francisco.

"I very casually said to a potter whose booth I was standing at, 'Why don't you bring it ... to Palo Alto?'" Master said. "She called me a couple of nights later and said, 'Well, how would you like to bring it down to Palo Alto?' I went to the director of the art center and said, 'What do you think about having this clay and glass festival on the premises?' He said that was fine, and so that was the beginning of it all."

Since then, the festival has become an annual tradition, bringing together a wide variety of artists and customers and creating a unique community of creatives and their supporters.

"There are people who don't miss this," Master said. "There are customers who



Courtesy the artist

Glass by artist Cory Ballis is featured at the Palo Alto Clay and Glass Festival.

have been coming for 30 years and have established their own relationships with the artists whose work they really follow. And so every year it's like a big reunion."

For artists, these close relationships with customers and connoisseurs are special and invaluable.

"I love seeing customers who come to this thing annually and check in with us," artist and longtime festival participant Jan Schachter said. "You get to know them a little bit more. A lot of them I stay in touch with during the year when I have my own studio sale because I live not too far away."

Additionally, Schachter also emphasized the close relationships between the many artists that have been a part of the festival for many years, and the warm community that these relationships have fostered.

"The artists that are participating obviously love to be part of it and to see artists from all over the state of California," Schachter said. "We may not see each other the whole year, so it's a great opportunity for us to gather. We always have a little artists party Saturday night, and we get to eat and drink together for a couple of hours and that's just a real treat."

Emori, an artist herself who has participated in the festival since 2018, also emphasized the welcoming nature of the festival community, crediting the support that the festival receives from its Bay Area audience to the diverse and highly skilled cast of artists that has populated the festival for the past three decades.

"If you've been there before, you could tell we are different from any other city art fair because of our high quality of artwork," Emori said. "So I think that these people love to come back and then shop from us and support artists who produce something very special and unique that speaks to them. When an artist makes a piece, they put their heart and mind into it. That piece is a unique creation and takes on its own persona. People come to our festival to find those unique pieces that speak to them. That is the value of handmade art." ■

Email Editorial Intern Akhil Joondeph at ajoondeph@paweekly.com.



Courtesy the artist

The festival includes an array of both functional and decorative glass and ceramics, including sculptures such as this one by Mari Emori.

The 30th annual Palo Alto Clay and Glass Festival takes place July 15-16, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto. Admission is free. acga.net/clay-and-glass-festival.

Food & Drink

Martini madness

5 Peninsula spots to shake up your cocktail hour

From a Coastside distillery to a Palo Alto steakhouse, these establishments make a mean martini

Story and photos by Devin Roberts



My alcoholic beverage preferences tend to be very hyperfocused for a period of time. In 2022 I sought out every tiki bar that I could find in the Bay Area and beyond. As the calendar turned to 2023, I was ready for a new tittle.

Instead of the festive, sweet, rum-filled drinks served in ornate and gaudy tiki mugs, I sought out the stripped-down classic served in a simple glass chalice.

My mixology mission for the first half of 2023 has been to find the best martinis on the Peninsula. My usual order is gin-based and served up, but for this quest I opened the parameters slightly to taste the best version according to local purveyors.

Like many classic cocktails, there is no definitive answer as to who invented the martini or where it originated. It appears the cocktail emerged sometime during the late 1800s and may have been a riff on the classic Martinez.

The martini was originally a gin drink until the 1950s, when vodka became widely distributed in the United States. Over the years, the martini moniker has expanded to include an array of cocktails such as the dirty martini, Gibson martini, espresso martini, appletini, Cosmopolitan and more.

There is no shortage of interesting and delicious cocktails being served in the 650, but where can you find the best martinis? Here are some of my favorites:

The Bay Area institution

Original Joe's began in 1937 as a 14-stool counter on a sawdust-covered floor at 144 Taylor St. in San Francisco's Tenderloin. Original Joe's Westlake opened in Daly City in 1956 and serves up classic Italian American fare

along with some well-crafted cocktails.

I visited on an inauspicious weeknight and the bar was packed. One of the first impressions anyone will make when visiting Original Joe's is the eclectic crowd. The bar area was beaming with energy and people of every walk of life. Luckily, I was able to grab the last open seat and take it all in.

Joe's Martini is a classic take with Sipsmith Gin, dry vermouth and blue cheese-stuffed olives. The ratio was more heavily in favor of the gin than I was expecting, but no complaints from me. Overall, it was a very familiar and tasty martini enjoyed in a loud and joyous atmosphere. Plus it pairs well with all the incredible Italian fare on the menu. I'm partial to the meatballs.

Original Joe's Westlake, 11 Glenwood Ave., Daly City; 650-755-7400, Instagram: @originaljoeswestlake.

The South City dive bar

The StandBy is a casual local bar that caters to nearby residents along with the biotech crowd that commutes into South San Francisco. The current iteration has been around for nearly 14 years and boasts an impressive lineup of cocktails, wine and craft beer.

One of the most impressive features of The StandBy is that they make all of their juices and syrups fresh in house, according to bar manager Blue Romero. The housemade cocktails are distinguished and include the Martini Proper, a beautifully simple martini made with Hendricks Gin and vermouth rinse and garnished with a single olive.

The StandBy, 935 Airport Blvd., South San Francisco; 650-588-8300, Instagram: @thestandby.



Above: The Standby's Bar Manager Blue Romero pours a Martini Proper. Below: A full bar at Original Joe's Westlake. Top: The Lavender Bee's Knees at Sundance the Steakhouse in Palo Alto.



The Silicon Valley steakhouse

Sundance the Steakhouse is a dimly lit bar and dining room found on El Camino Real in Palo Alto. Sundance first opened in

Palo Alto in 1974 as Sundance Mining Co. and has made lists of best steakhouses in America in years past. The bar area was full when I arrived on a Monday night, but I was able to grab a single seat available at the end of

the mahogany bar. Surprisingly, there isn't a classic martini on the menu but there is a martini section.

Bartender Brandon Smith suggested the popular Lavender Bee's Knees. It is a far stretch



The open air and contemporary ambiance at Jettywave Distillery offered a contrast to the other locations on the list, whose aesthetics veer more toward dark and vintage.

from a traditional interpretation, but I love Empress Gin so I decided to give it a try. In addition to Empress 1908 Gin, this cocktail includes fresh lemon juice, honey syrup, and a dash of lavender bitters and is served with a lemon twist garnish. While this is a delicious and approachable cocktail, it wasn't scratching my martini itch so I asked for another suggestion. The bartender proposed a vodka martini made with Belvedere Single Estate Rye Smogory Forest Vodka and vermouth, served with two housemade Roquefort stuffed olives. This was truly a smooth and flavorful drink that made me rethink my gin bias.

Sundance the Steakhouse,
1921 El Camino Real, Palo Alto;
650-321-6798, Instagram:
@sundancethesteakhouse.

The coastal distillery

Located in Pillar Point Harbor, Jettywave is a Coastside distillery that proclaims to bottle the modern Northern California coastal life. The distillery serves its spirits in an outdoor area with two bars and a decidedly laid-back vibe.

The ocean-themed cocktails are interesting takes on the classics along with some originals. The open air and contemporary ambiance made this a stark contrast to the other locations on this list, whose aesthetics veer more toward dark and vintage. I visited on a typically overcast Pacific Coast afternoon and was greeted with live music and a friendly welcome from bartender Nicole Lyon.

The martini option here is dubbed the "Wave, Jettywave," their take on a classic Vesper martini using inverted portions of their Offshore Vodka and CA Botanical Gin along with a spray of bergamot and lemon twist. The inverted portions make this a super smooth and refreshing cocktail experience, fitting of the fresh ocean air.

Jettywave Distillery,
155 Broadway, Half Moon Bay;
650-291-8835, Instagram:
@jettywavehmb.

The martini mecca

Selby's is located on the corner of Selby Lane and El Camino Real in the town of Atherton

(although the address is technically Redwood City) and celebrates classic American continental cuisine. This destination-worthy restaurant exudes old-school cool and feels like a location for grand celebrations. The bar area is exceptionally ornate and offers open seating. I was able to grab a seat right away and opened a tome of alcoholic beverages. Much of it was filled with wine, but there is a page devoted to cocktails. Ice-cold martinis are the focus of Selby's cocktail program and they claim to serve "the coldest martini on the West Coast."

Bar manager Lawrence Aljentera suggested the Vesper martini. This was a drink invented by author Ian Fleming in "Casino Royale" and the first of his works to feature James Bond. It is a bold and beautiful cocktail consisting of Monkey 47 Gin, Wheatley Vodka and Lillet Blanc and served with a lemon peel. It is a prebatched cocktail and truly served ice cold. The Vesper was so good that I opted for the other "coldest martini," named simply Dukes, with Roku Gin and dry vermouth and served with two



"Wave, Jettywave" martini served at Jettywave Distillery in Half Moon Bay.

olives. Since this is the martini mecca, I needed to try one more and saved the best for last: The Ford. This mind-melting martini consists of Hendrick's Gin, dry vermouth, orange bitters and benedictine.

Overall, Selby's is undoubtedly the reigning king when it comes to martinis on the Peninsula, and I would suggest everyone try it at least once. As for me, I'm taking a

break from martinis for a while. I thoroughly enjoyed every one of these delicious drinks, but I'm on to the next beverage quest. I hear an old fashioned calling my name!

Selby's, 3001 El Camino Real,
Redwood City; 650-546-7700,
Instagram: @selbysrestaurant. ■

Email contributor Devin Roberts at devinroberts1981@gmail.com.



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