

The Almanac

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

JANUARY 26, 2024 | VOL. 59 NO. 20



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Almost two years later, \$50 million Ravenswood middle school campus upgrade is complete

By Abigail Neely

This year's return from winter break was unlike any other for Cesar Chavez Ravenswood Middle School students. At drop-off, families no longer faced construction fences. Instead, students walked along a red carpet into their newly renovated campus.

"I'm watching the joy of the people dropping off their children," Principal Cristian Miley grinned.

In March 2022, the Ravenswood City School District began a \$50 million renovation project to modernize the middle school campus, the single largest new capital project in the district's history. Since then, half the campus has been closed to its 567 students during construction. Class was held in 30-year-old portables.

Finally, Miley is proud to have "the nicest school in the county." Two new buildings are home to a new media center, classrooms,

and student services offices. Bigger rooms mean more opportunities for group work and less noise, sixth grade math teacher Harriet Huang said.

For the first time, there is a dedicated space for the school nurse. Behind the school, new courtyards and play structures, open to the community, are being developed. Even small upgrades, like water fountains with filters, can have a big effect on the feeling of the space, the school's coordinator of operations, Kim Cheadle said.

Cheadle walks through the redesigned airy courtyard smiling, greeting students who say hello. She spent her winter break getting the campus ready for their return. Cheadle, like her parents before her, attended Cesar Chavez Ravenswood Middle. Still a part of the community years later, she sees how new physical spaces can shape student experiences.

See **RAVENSWOOD**, page 10



Magali Gauthier

Students hang out during their lunch break in a new quad area at Cesar Chavez Ravenswood Middle School in East Palo Alto on Jan. 23.

Sequoia district community split over controversial Israel-Hamas lesson

Teacher took a leave of absence following harassment stemming from lesson, she says

By Nicholas Mazzoni

Roughly 60 people, including parents, teachers, and students, spoke during the Sequoia Union High School District Board of Trustees meeting on Jan. 17, many in support of an ethnic studies teacher who is accused of teaching a one-sided, biased and anti-semitic lesson plan about the ongoing Israel-Hamas war to her students in early November.

Chloe Gentile-Montgomery taught a controversial lesson at Menlo-Atherton High School

in Atherton on Nov. 3. Around half of the people who spoke during the public comment portion of the Wednesday meeting supported Gentile-Montgomery, who teaches both ethnic studies and U.S. history at M-A.

Her lesson plan on the Israel-Hamas conflict has led to a petition calling for the school district to "ensure students are not subjected to discrimination and indoctrination from an educator who seems intent on spreading her biases to students from her position of power as their teacher,"

according to the petition.

The petition accuses Gentile-Montgomery of being biased by teaching a lesson plan propagated by anti-Semitism. But tensions rose during Wednesday's meeting from the personal harassment Gentile-Montgomery received fueling a divided response from the community.

On Jan. 18, Gentile-Montgomery, told this news organization that she was sorry if the lesson offended anybody but believed it had been taken out of context.

'Counter narratives'

"The main intention of the lesson was to address the questions my students were asking and teach them how to look at the news in general. There are several different perspectives and narratives, and we need to look at multiple sources to understand what is happening," Gentile-Montgomery said. "In the lesson, I wasn't asking (the students) to conclude the conflict; we were just looking at the news, which was the main idea, and we were identifying dominant and

counter narratives."

The lesson plan appeared in a petition calling for the termination of Gentile-Montgomery, which received more than 500 signatures in support, according to Tabia Lee, director of the Coalition for Empowered for Education. The organization directs its donations to the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values, a nonprofit organization. The petition explains how the lesson plan is biased.

While Lee doesn't have a child in Gentile-Montgomery's

See **LESSON**, page 16

INSIDE

ARTSCENE 20 | FOOD & DRINK 22

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Portola Valley couple launches nonalcoholic wine brand

By Sophia Markoulakis

In 2019, Katie and Scott Mitic were both approaching a milestone birthday and decided to moderate their drinking. When they looked for nonalcoholic beverages that they could imbibe during their favorite rituals like cooking dinner together, they found the alternatives disappointing at best.

“We wanted a complex, sophisticated beverage that played well with food and tickled our senses. We just couldn’t find that wine replacement, so we decided to create one,” said Katie Mitic. Not long after, the Mitics met with Scott Baird, founder of iconic San Francisco bar Trick Dog, who touted verjus’ merits and explained how its acidic ‘bite’ is a bartender’s best friend when crafting nonalcoholic drinks (verjus is the juice of unripened wine grapes).

As pioneers in the tech industry (with stints at Yahoo!, HP, Facebook, Sitch and TrustedID), the Mitics were accustomed to creating problem-solving products, so they got to work on building an elevated beverage that would appeal to anyone looking to reduce or remove their alcohol consumption. The couple was excited about the challenge, tackling a category (food and drink) that they knew nothing about.

“We were at a point in our career where everything felt a



Courtesy Kally

“We wanted a complex, sophisticated beverage that played well with food and tickled our senses. We just couldn’t find that wine replacement, so we decided to create one,” says Katie Mitic.

little too familiar,” Katie Mitic said. “We love being on a new learning curve with this.”

Today, Kally is carving out a new lane in the nonalcoholic “wine” category, mainly because it’s made from one of ancient

Rome’s favorite elixirs and isn’t de-alcoholized through reverse osmosis like many of the zero-proof “wines” on the market today and isn’t fermented.

See **KALLY**, page 17

Menlo Park adopts, looks to act on, housing plan

By Neil Gonzales

Menlo Park can now finally move full-speed ahead on putting its state-mandated, long-range housing plan into actual action.

On Tuesday, Jan. 23, the City Council voted 3-1 to adopt Menlo Park’s 2023-31 housing element document as conditionally approved by the state. Vice Mayor Drew Combs dissented, and Councilmember Maria Doerr was absent.

The city now sends the plan to the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) ahead of the Jan. 31 deadline for final certification.

The anticipated stamp of approval ends a process of nearly three years during which the city went through numerous public discussions and debates toward crafting the plan and sent four drafts to the state before being granted the conditional OK in a Dec. 20 letter from HCD.

The city will “be able to move forward with focusing more toward implementing more of the housing-element programs, knowing that we are working from a fully-certified housing element,” Menlo Park Principal Planner Tom Smith said during the council meeting.

He noted that the city has initiated some of those programs already.

Eight of 69 programs involving zoning-related amendments that the council approved late last year are underway, he said.

“In the coming years, staff will be focusing on programs that

have featured prominently in council discussions and through community feedback,” he said. Those include a strategy against the displacement of residents, analyzing and preparing downtown parking lots for affordable units, and revising the city’s below-market-rate housing guidelines.

“In addition,” Smith said, “We are continuing work on the environmental-justice and safety elements and anticipate returning to council tentatively during the spring months of this year for more information on that.”

After his council colleagues passed the housing element, Combs briefly spoke on his no vote.

“I just wanted to clarify: I had no specific objection to those amendments and very much understood the necessity of them,” he said. “I have preexisting objections to the housing element.”

Every eight years, local governments throughout California need to update their plan according to the state’s Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) requirements.

For the current eight-year span, RHNA required Menlo Park to accommodate the development of close to 3,000 new dwellings at different income levels — up from the 655 in the last cycle.

The plan also includes goals and policies “to encourage housing production, improve equity and reduce disparities in housing throughout the community.”

See **MENLO HOUSING**, page 16

Case continued for alleged Half Moon Bay mass shooter

By Nick Mazzoni

One year after the mass shooting in Half Moon Bay, where seven people were shot dead and one person survived, the alleged shooter Chunli Zhao was expected to make a plea in the courtroom.

But, the proceedings were continued until Feb. 29, after Judge Sean Dabel granted the defense’s motion.

After a year of continuances, Zhao was indicted by a criminal grand jury on Jan. 19, on

the same seven counts of first-degree murder and one count of attempted first-degree murder.

“We wanted to move the case along, and because of the victim’s and surviving victim and family,” Wagstaffe said. “The longer the case drags out, the longer the burden is for them.”

The indictment will skip over



Chunli Zhao

the preliminary hearing, which is a court proceeding where prosecutors present the case to a judge, establishing probable cause and sufficient evidence.

The indictment comes weeks after Zhao’s attorney asked for a continuance that would have extended the preliminary hearing into March, San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said.

Zhao is accused of killing seven of eight co-workers he shot at two Half Moon Bay mushroom farms where he worked on Jan.

23, 2023. He faces life in prison, according to the DA’s Office.

While the criminal proceedings have moved slowly, the incident exposed the poor living conditions, mental health and access to fair pay to the city’s farmworkers, which has nudged state and county officials to address.

It also left a scar on the quaint ocean-side community of Half Moon Bay. Sunday, Jan. 21, the community held a healing ceremony to honor the families and victims of the shooting.

The event featured healing practices and members of the Half Moon Bay City Council, State Sen. Josh Becker, Assembly member Marc Berman, U.S. Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Palo Alto, San Mateo County District 3 Supervisor Ray Mueller, and former United States Rep. Jackie Speier spoke in remembrance of the tragedy. ■

Email Staff Writer Nicholas Mazzoni at nmazzoni@rwcpulse.com.

TOWN OF WOODSIDE

2955 WOODSIDE ROAD
WOODSIDE, CA 94062

The Town is seeking a volunteer to fill an unexpired term until 2025.

The Architectural and Site Review Board (ASRB) reviews and makes recommendations to the Planning Director on certain residential and commercial projects as they relate to the community character, site planning, building design, and landscape elements outlined in the Municipal Code and Residential Design Guidelines.

Meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month at 4:30 p.m.

Participation on the ASRB is a great way to assist the Town in upholding the values of the community. Please contact Planning Director, Sage Schaan, at sschaan@woodsidetown.org or (650) 530-3432 with any questions regarding the role of ASRB members. Please contact Town Clerk, Jennifer Li at jli@woodsidetown.org or (650) 851-6790 for more information regarding the application process.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:
Friday, February 2, 2024, by 5:00 p.m.

INTERVIEW AND APPOINTMENT BY TOWN COUNCIL:
Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

January 26, 2024
4th Quarter 2023

AN IMPORTANT NOTICE REQUIRED BY CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF DRINKING WATER

Este aviso contiene información muy importante sobre su agua potable, por favor lea el aviso en español si va aquí incluido. Si el aviso en español no va incluido aquí, contacte al sistema de agua para pedir una copia

The O'Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Company has levels of manganese above the secondary drinking water standard.

Although this is not an emergency, as our customers, you have a right to know what happened, what you should do, and what we are doing to correct this situation. Our water system is in violation of a secondary drinking water standard. Violation of a secondary standard does not pose an immediate threat to health.

We routinely monitor for the presence of drinking water contaminants. Average results for water samples for the last four quarters have manganese levels of 50 ppb in well #1 and 138 ppb in well #2 (ppb=parts per billion). This is above the secondary drinking water standard, or secondary maximum contaminant level of 50 ppb. Manganese concentrations above the standard may have an effect on taste and tend to leave black deposits in some plumbing systems.

What should I do?

- You do not need to use an alternative water supply (e.g., bottled water). There is no health risk.
- If you have other health issues concerning the consumption of this water, you may wish to consult your doctor.

What happened? What is being done?

O'Connor Water has been above the secondary standard for manganese for many years, and this has been described to members in the annual Report on Water Quality Measurements. Recent state regulations have imposed stricter requirements for complying with the secondary standard for manganese. The state has issued the company a citation for noncompliance. The state ordered the company to start quarterly monitoring in February 2012, and this monitoring is still ongoing at both wells. The state also required that manganese monitoring be continued quarterly and that the results of these tests be reported to all water consumers.

The Company has been working with State agencies and the City of Menlo Park to complete the planning of a manganese treatment facility and construction is well along at the Company's property.

Please share this information with all the other people who drink this water, especially those who may not have received this public notice directly (for example, people in apartments, nursing homes, schools, and businesses). You can do this by posting this public notice in a public place or distributing copies by hand or mail.

For further information contact:
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O'Connor Tract Co-Operative Water Co., System 4110019
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The Almanac

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



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Locks are being changed at Holbrook-Palmer Park

Tennis court locks will be changing at Holbrook-Palmer Park on Feb. 15. New keys will be on sale starting Jan. 23 at Town Hall, 80 Fair Oaks Lane from Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.- 5 p.m.

For Atherton residents, keys are priced at \$100 for hard and clay courts and \$50 for clay courts only. Non-resident keys cost \$275 for hard court keys or \$30 per hour on clay courts through Player Capital, Atherton's exclusive provider for lessons and clinics. Payment is accepted by cash or check only and a valid I.D. is required.

Pickleball trials are also now available and court reservations can be made online through Player Capital. Reservations are available everyday until noon and on Tuesday and Thursday evenings starting at 5 p.m.

For more information visit ci.atherton.ca.us.

Volunteers needed for Woodside Citizen Advisory Committees

Woodside is looking for volunteers to fill multiple Citizen Advisory Committees and applications are open until Friday, Feb. 2, at 5 p.m. The town is looking to fill the following committees:

- Arts and Culture Committee
- Circulation Committee
- Climate and Sustainability Committee
- Emergency Preparedness Committee
- Environment and Open Space Committee
- Livestock and Equine Heritage Committee
- Recreation Committee
- Trails Committee
- Volunteerism Committee
- Woodside History Committee

Residents who are interested in applying can request more information from Melissa Cardinale at Town Hall, 2955 Woodside Road or by email at mcardinale@woodsidetown.org.

New curriculum aimed at reducing harm from drug use

Stanford's REACH Lab, which makes prevention education curriculum and resources, has created Safety First, a new curriculum on drug education and intervention.

Bonnie Halpern-Felsher, founder and director of Stanford's Halpern-Felsher REACH Lab will host "Safety First: Empowering Teenagers to Prevent and Reduce Drug Use" on Wednesday, Jan. 31, from 5:30-6:30 p.m.

She will discuss the lab's new Safety First curriculum, a resource for lessons on alcohol, opioids, fentanyl, psychedelics and other drugs.

With scientific information, the program is aimed at empowering high school students to quit and reduce harm from drug use. The Zoom link for the free event will be available when you register at tinyurl.com/Jan-31-event.

Learn about cyberbullying and how to use social media safely

Sameer Hinduja is hosting an online event about cyberbullying, artificial intelligence and safe media practices. Hinduja is a researcher on youth and social media issues and works to train others on how to positively use technology.

"Cyberbullying, AI, and Social Media: The Role of Parents, Youth & Community" will take place on Thursday, Feb. 1, from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Families, educators, mental health professionals and community members are all invited to join.

Registration for the free online event can be made on eventbrite.

Reorganization of Ravenswood Board of Trustees

On Dec. 14, 2023, the Ravenswood City School District Board of Trustees reorganized as follows:

- Board President: Mele K. Latu (term expires 2026)
- Board Vice President: Jenny Varghese Bloom (term expires 2024)
- Board Clerk: Samuel Tavera (term expires 2024)
- Board Member: Tamara Sobomehin (term expires 2026)
- Board Member: Laura Nuñez (term expires 2026)

See **COMMUNITY BRIEFS**, page 18

Register for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten at local school districts

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

School districts across Menlo Park, Woodside and Portola Valley will be opening transitional kindergarten (TK) and kindergarten registration for the 2024-25 school year.

TK is offered across all school districts to offer children between the ages of 4 and 5 a smoother bridge between preschool and kindergarten.

In California, eligibility for TK will be gradually expanding for the 2025-26 school year to include all 4 year olds. Until then, the state requires that children will qualify for TK enrollment if they turn 5 between Sept. 2 and June 2 for the 2024-25 school year.

Many local school districts have already adopted the 2025-26 requirements.

Las Lomas Elementary School District

The pre-registration process for TK and kindergarten begins on Monday, Feb. 5. To qualify for TK children will have to be 4 by Sept. 1, 2024.

For more information visit, llesd.org or call Las Lomas Elementary at 650-854-5900 for any questions.

Menlo Park City School District

Registration will open on Feb. 1 for TK and kindergarten in the Menlo Park City School District. To be eligible for TK children must have their birthdays fall between Sept. 2, 2019 to Sept. 1, 2020. Kindergarten registration will be open to children turning 5 years old on

or before Sept. 1, 2024.

More information on registration can be found at mpcsd.org or during the following meetings:

Encinal Kindergarten Info Night: Jan. 25 from 5-6 p.m. in the gym at Encinal School, 195 Encinal Ave., Atherton

Encinal TK Info Night: Feb. 6 from 6-7 p.m. in the library at Encinal School

Laurel Prospective Family Info Night: Jan. 25 from 6-7 p.m. in Room E3 at Laurel School Lower Campus, 95 Edge Road, Atherton

Oak Knoll TK/Kinder Info Night: Jan. 25 from 5-6 p.m. in the large gym at Oak Knoll School, 1895 Oak Knoll Lane, Menlo Park

Oak Knoll Kindergarten Info Night: Jan. 25 from 6:30-7:30 p.m. in the large gym at Oak Knoll School

Portola Valley School District

On Jan. 23, Portola Valley School District opened their registration for the 2024-25 school year. To be eligible for TK, students must be 4 years old on or before Sept. 1, 2024. For kindergarten, students must be of the age of 5 on or before Sept. 1, 2024.

The registration process can be done online on the district website, pvsd.net.

Ravenswood City School District

Registration is currently open for TK and kindergarten students in Ravenswood City School District.

Children must be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2024 to be eligible for TK and 5 years old by Sept. 1, 2024 to

register for kindergarten.

The district's elementary schools will be holding TK and kindergarten open houses for families to meet teachers and observe classes on the following dates:

Los Robles Ronald McNair will have an open house on Jan. 24 and 26 from 9-10:30 a.m., 2033 Pulgas Ave., East Palo Alto

Costano School of the Arts will hold an open house on Jan. 30 and Feb. 1 from 8:45-9:30 a.m., 2695 Fordham St., East Palo Alto

Families that are interested can call 650-838-3564 or complete an online interest form. Registrations can also be done in person at the district office, 2160 Euclid Ave., Palo Alto.

For more information visit ravenswoodschools.org.

Woodside Elementary School District

The Woodside Elementary School District began their registration on Jan. 15 and are offering informational meetings for TK and kindergarten on Jan. 30.

For families interested in registering their child for kindergarten, a meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 30, at 8:30 a.m. and



Devin Roberts

Students in a TK class at Encinal Elementary School in Menlo Park on Jan. 22.

at 11:30 a.m. for families interested in TK registration.

In order to qualify for kindergarten, children must be the age of 5 by Sept. 1, 2024. For TK, students must be turning 5 between Sept. 2, 2024 to Sept. 1, 2025.

For more information visit the district website, woodsideschool.us.

Preschools

Woodside Preschool is open to all children 2 years and older. Registration is now open for the 2024-25 school year and priority is given to families who reside in the district boundaries.

Applications can be found on their district website. For

more information or questions email Lisa Dayeh at ldayeh@woodsideschool.us.

Menlo Park City School District offers enrollment into their Early Learning Center for children 3 years old by Dec. 1, 2024 and are toilet trained by the first day of school. Applications for the next school year are open and enrollment is offered as they become available.

More information about registration can be found on earlylearning.mpcsd.org. ■

Email Staff Writer
Jennifer Yoshikoshi at
jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.

Temporary closures at Menlo Park parks amid upgrades

By Neil Gonzales

Burgess and Willow Oaks parks in Menlo Park are getting an estimated \$4.8 million in upgrades but with that some associated temporary closures.

On Monday, Jan. 22, the playground area at Burgess Park at 701 Laurel St. closed for a project that will bring new playground equipment, rubberized surfacing, and a parking stall and concrete walkways compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, among other improvements, the city said.

But the restrooms, tennis courts, picnic area and fields will remain open during the work.

The project at Willow Oaks Park at 490 Willow Road has

already begun, closing some areas there also, the city said.

The rehabilitation at Willow Oaks includes playground enhancements, a new dog park, basketball resurfacing, upgraded lighting to the tennis courts and updated pathways to improve connectivity with the surrounding neighborhood.

The work at Burgess is estimated to cost \$1 million while Willow Oaks is \$3.8 million, according to city Public Works Director Azalea Mitch.

Menlo Park contracted Hayward-based Suarez & Munoz Construction Inc. to do the work at both parks.

All the renovations should be finished by late spring, said Jia Tan, a project engineer with the company. ■



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Menlo Park school district approves boundary change

By Joshua Picazo

During its first board meeting of the year, the Menlo Park City School District (MPCSD) unanimously voted to approve new internal enrollment boundaries, a move they said would make their school's capacities more efficient. The new boundaries took effect immediately.

The new boundaries will affect enrollment at Oak Knoll Elementary in Menlo Park and Encinal Elementary in Atherton. However, students will be grandfathered in, meaning those from the area that changed zones could continue

to attend their current schools.

"To be very clear, we have no plans at all to move any current students or families unless they request to shift their school preference," said Superintendent Kristen Gracia at the meeting. "We're not interested in disrupting our current students and families' experience in our district."

The district said the move was intended to alleviate anticipated enrollment increases near Encinal School's former zone due to new housing developments and other projects. In particular, the new Middle Plaza mixed-use development on El Camino Real, developed by

Stanford University, is expected to increase enrollment at Encinal. The district also said that Oak Knoll has more of an ability to take on and accommodate an increased number of students.

"Encinal's enrollment was concerning," added Gracia. She said the district used a demographer's data to reach these conclusions and that she had not heard any concerns from the community since the changes were recommended during a December board meeting.

"It's clear to me that our community, at this point, has no



MPCSD Instrumental Music Teacher Andre Ehling teaches music at Encinal Elementary in Menlo Park on Jan. 22.

Devin Roberts

See **BOUNDARY**, page 19

Atherton studies revising fees to incentivize housing development

By Neil Gonzales

The Atherton City Council has been looking at adjusting service fees with an eye toward giving property owners incentives to help the town expand housing over the next several years per state requirements.

But at the same time, the council seeks to recover as

much as possible the costs that the town absorbs in providing a service when they exceed the fees actually charged, amounting to a subsidy.

"We're trying to incentivize (but) recoup as much as we can from things that are not in our line of what we want to promote," Mayor Diana Hawkins-Manuelian said during a Jan. 17 council meeting.

That night, the council focused on fees related to ADUs (accessory dwelling units) as part of a review of charges that people pay the town for planning, building and engineering services.

ADUs and so-called junior ADUs, or smaller versions of such structures, figure into a long-range plan called the housing element that the town has

been working on since 2022 to get state certification.

The town is aiming for 35 new ADUs a year under the state Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) program for the current 2023-31 cycle. Overall, the town must plan for 348 new housing units — a significant increase from the 93 RHNA allotment called for during the previous eight-year period.

"I think there are policy decisions that the council should make about incentivizing our residents to do things that are environmentally impactful and to build ADUs and JADUs to meet our housing element requirements," Vice Mayor Elizabeth Lewis said.

Her council colleagues agreed.

See **ATHERTON HOUSING**, page 19

U.S. House of Representatives Candidates' Debate

Wednesday, Jan. 31 7-9 p.m.

Palo Alto City Council Chambers | City Hall, 250 Hamilton Ave. | Palo Alto

FEATURING

Joby Bernstein (D)	Peter Dixon (D)	Rishi Kumar (D)	Sam Liccardo (D)	Evan Low (D)	Julie Lythcott-Haims (D)	Ahmed Mostafa (D)	Peter Ohtaki (R)	Joe Simitian (D)	Greg Tanaka (D)

*Karl Ryan (R) is unconfirmed

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Come hear from the candidates, live and in person. The event will also be live streamed on YouTube and cable TV channel 30 by the Midpeninsula Media Center.

California's open primary election is Tuesday, March 5. Voters can vote for any candidate regardless of party affiliation. The top two in the primary will face off in November unless one candidate receives more than 50%.

The 16th District runs from Pacifica to Los Gatos and includes the Midpeninsula.

MODERATORS

Gennady Sheyner, Reporter, Palo Alto Weekly

Zoe Morgan, Reporter, Mountain View Voice

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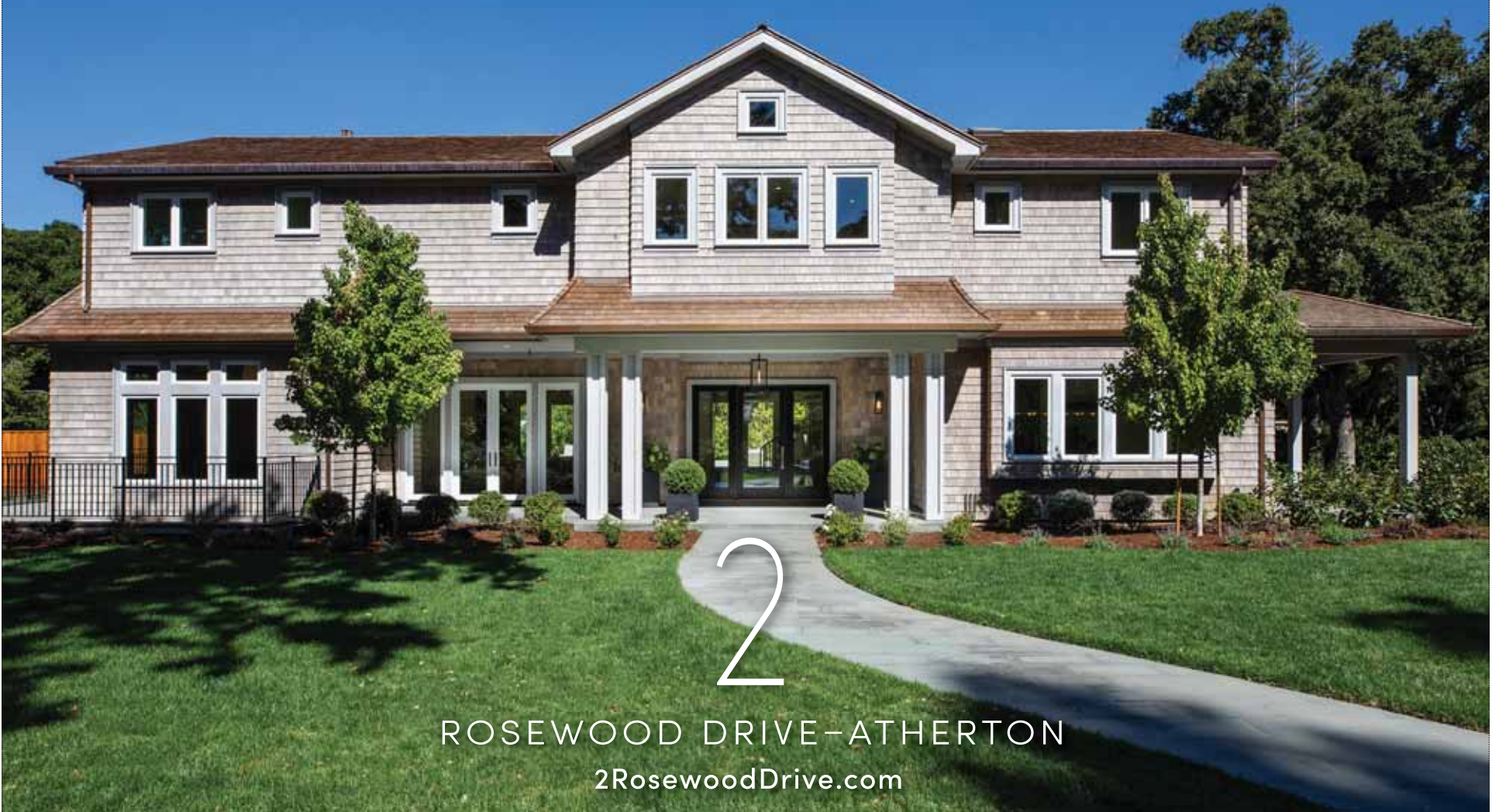
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Jenn Wall takes reins as Woodside mayor during crucial term

By Joshua Picazo

Woodside's mayor for the year, Jenn Wall, says her dedication to Woodside, extensive background in city governance and professional background prepare her to guide the town in the coming year.

While elected to the Town Council in 2020, she said her tenure on the Planning Commission may be much needed to steer Woodside as it faces a key year in planning for housing.

That experience is something she hopes to lean on as the town goes back to the drawing board in its attempts to comply with the mandatory housing element, an issue other neighboring cities and towns have also found



Jenn Wall

difficult to cross the finish line on.

The first female mayor of Woodside since 2016, Wall laid out her vision to *The Almanac* for Woodside and what pushed her toward public service and upcoming projects.

On her call to public service

Wall said her problem-solving skills and feel for practical solutions were key in her motivation to seek public office in the community she loves.

"I really invested in (Woodside) as a community and just care a lot about its future. So, in terms of why I became a public servant, in addition to just loving Woodside, I really enjoy problem-solving," she said.

Wall added that her background working as general counsel for a tech company (Mountain View-based and Alphabet-owned Intrinsic) also

gives her added experience with tackling issues big and small.

She said that enthusiasm for hearing feedback from the community and town staff, as well as finding solutions to problems the town of just over 5,100 people faces, is what she thinks will play a role in her public career.

In 2012, Jenn Wall laid down roots in Woodside's Glens neighborhood, marking the beginning of her journey into public service. Immersing herself in the community's concerns, she embarked on her civic involvement as a member of the Circulation Commission.

In this role, Wall said she advocated for enhancing safety on public roads, a pivotal experience that led to her joining the Planning Commission.

On what she hopes to achieve during her term

The state-mandated housing element requires the town to plan for 348 units of housing

within the next seven years. It is an issue that has recently encountered roadblocks, but Wall says her experience may be the key to solving it.

"I think that's one of the biggest issues that a lot of the towns in the area are facing right now. We've been working on it in earnest for a couple of years now, and I'm optimistic that we will get to an improved housing element hopefully early in 2024," she added.

Other topics, such as improved safety for routes to schools on Woodside roads, are key goals for Wall, which she said was her initial focus upon joining the council.

She also hopes that communication fused with modern technology can play a key role in serving residents during her term.

"One thing I'm working on with the town is improvements to our town communication. We are going to have software

improvement. We'll be rolling out a new town website in the coming weeks."

Wall expressed her anticipation for implementing social media as a communication channel. Eager to embrace this modern tool, she envisions its potential to better engage with the Woodside community.

"I'm pleased to report that we have hired the new town engineer, so we're really looking forward to working closely with him from the public works projects that we'll be working on and are concluding to the Glens Path Construction."

The Glens Path project aims to provide a safe sidewalk for pedestrians on Glenwood Avenue, which is notably narrow. The town will also be looking at parking in the Glens, she said. ■

Email Contributing Writer Joshua Picazo at joshuadpicazo@gmail.com.

Sequoia district board meeting erupts into arguments over ethnic studies lesson

By Arden Margulis and Ameya Nori / M-A Chronicle

The Sequoia Union High School District's (SUHSD) Board of Trustees meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 17, was one of the most chaotic board meetings in recent memory, with teachers and parents at odds over a recent M-A ethnic studies lesson involving the Israel-Hamas conflict taught by two ethnic studies teachers. Over 60 people spoke regarding the issue during the Board's public comment which lasted for over an hour. At one point, a verbal conflict arose between a community member and an M-A student, which led to multiple audience members yelling and police being called.

Ethnic studies teacher and Black Student Union (BSU) advisor Chloe Gentile-Montgomery, one of the teachers who presented the slide deck, has been the main recipient of the backlash over the lesson. Gentile-Montgomery, who is currently on work leave as she "does not feel safe" at M-A, publicly addressed the issue for the first time at the meeting through Zoom during public comment.

Throughout the night, audience members condemned the slideshow, many calling it "propaganda," and one referring to it as "Hamas propaganda." The most common concern audience members raised was that the

slideshow encouraged antisemitism. One community member, Noa Glaser, referring to a slide from the lesson that gave a general definition for dominant narratives, said, "I would be no less appalled than if I saw the Sambo blackface or the Yellow Peril. The imagery of the Jewish puppet master controlling the world was just one of the images that were unironically displayed in this one-sided lesson."

Hila Maoz, a parent with a child at M-A added, "This is a presentation that spreads hatred. My daughter was harassed. You're talking about harassment toward the teacher, but we as Israelis and Jews are being harassed, we are targeted and we no longer feel at home."

A prospective parent, Meromit Singer, said, "When I saw the slides from the lesson being discussed I was shocked to my core. This (slideshow) makes me, my family, and our community feel the extreme opposite of included. It makes us feel hated and singled out and definitely makes me feel unsafe to send my children to M-A."

Sequoia High School history teacher Diana Nguyen, who was part of the original ethnic studies course proposal team and coauthored a petition in defense of Gentile-Montgomery, said, "We want to name what is happening in the world and have really hard conversations with our students. At this moment it

does mean teaching about Israel and Palestine. There is no perfect way to do this, but we have to have trust, and we cannot let harassment and intimidation govern our students' education."

A community member who identified herself as Nehi said, "As the daughter of two Holocaust survivors, when I saw the slideshow I was shocked to be living in California and see such an antisemitic slideshow. It's inaccurate, it's ignorant. This is not education, this is propaganda."

Gentile-Montgomery defended the lesson she taught, saying, "My lesson plan has been taken outside of context. I added additional nuance during the lesson which is not included on the slides. I did not receive any complaints from students or parents. Instead, people went directly to the principal, superintendent, and board. I am upset about the assumptions that have been made about my ancestry: I come from Black, Italian and Jewish ancestry."

She added, "I can't help but feel that these attacks are somewhat race-based as I am the only Black credentialed teacher and the only one in the History Department with an ethnic studies degree."

M-A ethnic studies teacher Lan Nguyen came to her colleague's defense, saying, "I want

RAVENSWOOD

continued from page 1

With the renovation comes an expectation that students who aren't used to new things learn to take care of their spaces, Cheadle explained. She chuckles when one sixth grader says the teachers are stricter in the new classrooms.

"I went to school here and nothing was ever new," Cheadle said. "(I'm) just trying to hold them more accountable. They got to know this is our little city, and, yes, we've gone through some things, but we are conquering."

Improvements like newly installed classroom technology and air conditioning, which many don't have at home, helped contribute to what Miley described as a "palpable positive energy" after the school's reopening.

"The kids felt so good about the space that it translated into

how they were engaging," Miley said. After school, even kids who seemed not to care at the grand opening began to open up, he remembers. "They're walking by me during that first week like, 'Dr. Miley, our school is so dope!'"

Many view the renovation as not just an improvement for the school, but for the wider community. In an area where many families can see the economic disparities between their district and neighboring Palo Alto, Miley believes that Ravenswood's new campus proves that its historically underserved community deserves new things, too.

"The culmination of this project right now is something that I think is going to really bolster and inspire this community to feel supported, to feel like they matter, and to feel like people are truly putting their money where their mouth is," he said. ■



Magali Gauthier

Science teacher Archana Patel gives a lecture to sixth graders in a new classroom at Cesar Chavez Ravenswood Middle School in East Palo Alto on Jan. 23.

See **ETHNIC STUDIES**, page 18

Portola Valley housing plan hits new snag

A new memo from the state is asking the town to do more to meet its housing goals

By Neil Gonzales

With a state deadline looming next week, Portola Valley's long-range housing plan has hit a new snag.

Central to the very latest conundrum is the state Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) wanting the town to open additional areas for housing opportunities by revising a minimum lot requirement in a particular program.

"The iterative updates from HCD over the last few weeks have the impact of moving the goalpost at a critical juncture in the process," Mayor Sarah Wernikoff said in an email to The Almanac. "The process with HCD has been expensive and time-consuming and has cost us disproportionately given our town's small size, staff and budget."

Jon Biggs, Portola Valley's interim planning and building director, detailed the most-recent hurdle in a Jan. 18 update to the Town Council ahead of its next meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 24.

At that meeting, council members were hoping to consider

approving what's called the housing element and sending it to the state by the Jan. 31 deadline. This would be the town's fourth attempt to get its state-mandated plan certified by HCD.

The council earlier this month was already set to send the plan to HCD, but on Jan. 8, the town received an email from the state requesting fresh edits involving how to enhance housing mobility and other issues.

The town made the changes — most of which "were straightforward and provided clarification," Biggs said in his update.

But the HCD reviewer for the town has been working with pointed out that the Opt-In Diversification Program required adjustment "so that it facilitated housing mobility to a greater degree," Biggs said.

The town agreed on further changes, he said, but now "we learned from our reviewer that the edits to the Opt-In program were not sufficient. ... Key among these new edits was a change to the minimum lot size from one acre downward to one-half acre, which would open this program to additional sites in town."

The town asked the reviewer "if the half-acre minimum was a new requirement or if it could be changed back to one acre," he said. "We received a response from our reviewer that the lot-size minimum was 'flexible;' however, there was nothing in the response clarifying the intended degree of flexibility."

The town continues to reach out to HCD to get clarification as "the half-acre minimum lot size is an issue for the town," he said.

In an email to The Almanac, Biggs indicated that the community has already put a lot of discussion and feedback into the Opt-In program.

"A one-acre lot-size minimum has always been an element of this program, including all the submittals provided to HCD," he said. "Changing this now without giving the community a chance to review and provide its feedback is very concerning."

The town has been working with the reviewer "to craft language that is acceptable," he added. "However, we have yet to get a final determination agreeing to the language we have provided. Unfortunately, this leaves

a door open for HCD to require additional modifications to this program, which has the potential to impact our schedule."

For now, Biggs said in his update, town staff is recommending that the council consider adopting the housing element with the one-acre minimum as originally laid out.

But if HCD responds that a half acre is indeed the required minimum, he said, the issue would then be deemed "a significant enough change that it should go to" the town Planning Commission for deliberation before returning to the council.

Portola Valley must plan for 253 new units during the current 2023-31 period of the state Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) program — a 295% increase from the 64 in the

previous eight-year cycle.

HCD kept sending back the town's drafts of its 2023-31 housing element, citing more work was necessary each time.

The town's fourth version, released Dec. 1 for public review, attempted to address concerns the state raised in July by providing a zoning-density range of 20-23 units per acre for multifamily development and bolstering efforts to encourage the production of accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, among other strategies.

If the plan continues to fail to garner HCD certification, Portola Valley would remain open to state penalties, including what's known as "builder's remedy," which allows developers to bypass local land-use rules for their projects.

"We are now one year into our eight-year cycle," Wernikoff said. "And it's undermining our ability to get to the work of actually building housing."

An HCD spokesperson could not be reached for comment. ■

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TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY NOTICE OF TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Architectural and Site Control Commissioners and Planning Commissioners Needed

ASCC NOTICE

The Portola Valley Town Council is seeking three volunteers to serve on the Town's Architectural and Site Control Commission (ASCC). Two terms expired in December 2023 and the other expires in December 2024. The ASCC consists of five members appointed by the Town Council, and meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month. The ASCC is charged with the review and approval of design review applications and site development permits, including applications for new homes, second units, larger additions, second-story additions, and commercial buildings. In addition, the ASCC provides comments on conditional use permits, subdivisions, variances, and other matters referred by the Town Council, the Planning Commission, or Town Staff. To apply, please submit a letter of interest to jbiggs@portolavalley.net by 5:00 pm on January 31, 2024. The applications will be distributed to the Town Council.

The Town Council will conduct interviews and appoint new members at a scheduled meeting on the week of February 5th, 2024. This date may change, dependent on the number of interviews to be conducted. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Jon Biggs, Interim Planning and Building Director.

PLANNING COMMISSION NOTICE

The Portola Valley Town Council is seeking two volunteers to serve on the Town's Planning Commission. Both of these terms expired in December 2023. The Planning Commission consists of five members appointed by the Town Council, and meetings are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month. The Planning Commission is responsible for addressing policy matters related to general land use and development in Town. Sitting as the Board of Adjustment, the Commission reviews applications for variances, and appeals from decisions made by town officials administering zoning and subdivision ordinances. Its decisions may be appealed to the Town Council. To apply, please submit a letter of interest to jbiggs@portolavalley.net to be distributed to the Town Council by 5:00 pm on January 31, 2024.

The Town Council will conduct interviews and appoint new members at a scheduled meeting on the week of February 5th, 2024. This date may change, dependent on the number of interviews to be conducted. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact Jon Biggs, Interim Planning and Building Director.



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DRE #01854880
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Peninsula Health Care District grants over \$1M to nonprofit organizations across the Peninsula

By Joshua Picazo

On Jan. 17, the Peninsula Health Care District announced that several community organizations will split over \$1 million in grants for its 2024 cycle.

Recipients work with the Peninsula community on four specific issues: healthy aging, mental health, preventive health and equity in health.

“We are proud to recognize the tireless efforts of our grantees who are addressing critical health issues, advocating for vulnerable populations, and striving to create a healthier, more equitable future for all,” said Ana Maria Pulido, CEO of Peninsula Health Care District (PCHD), in a press

release. The district serves San Bruno, Millbrae, Burlingame, Hillsborough, San Mateo and Foster City. The tax-funded organization brings health-focused programs and services to the community, including running the Peninsula Health & Fitness Center, along with dental and mental health services.

“Our focus on healthy aging, mental health, preventive health, and healthy equity reflect critical need areas in our district,” said PCHD board Chair Lawrence Cappel in the press release. “Our team will continue to seek meaningful partnerships like these that will advance the overall health and wellness of our community.”

The 33 grants ranged from \$10,000 to \$60,000 and went

to organizations in cities such as Palo Alto, Menlo Park, San Mateo, South San Francisco and Redwood City.

San Mateo-based grantee Peninsula Bridge is an organization focused on working closely with lower-income, underrepresented students across the Peninsula to achieve college and career success while also dealing with the stress that comes with being a student.

“This PHCD grant is providing life-changing access to invaluable mental health services for our Peninsula Bridge (PB) scholars,” said Randi Shafton, executive director of Peninsula Bridge.

Peninsula Bridge works with schools such as Castilleja School in Palo Alto, Crystal Springs Upland

School in Belmont, East Palo Alto Academy, Episcopal Day School of St. Matthew and Nueva School in San Mateo, Menlo School, Sacred Heart Schools in Atherton and Woodside Priory School.

“One in four students today are struggling with increased anxiety and loneliness,” said Shafton. “This support can provide strategies and tools to help our students feel more connected, a stronger sense of belonging, and a greater sense of personal confidence and success. We are so grateful!”

Other nonprofits that received funding included Caminar, based in Redwood City, which assists with mental health and substance abuse treatment, and Peninsula Behavioral Health in Palo Alto, which similarly focuses

on mental health.

Peninsula Volunteers Inc., based in Menlo Park, was granted \$55,000 and works to provide local seniors with meals.

Each year, nonprofit organizations can apply to the PHCD for grants that assist those living in San Bruno, Millbrae, Burlingame, Hillsborough, San Mateo, and part of Foster City. However, organizations not based in those cities that can show they provide services to residents in the healthcare district’s service area are also eligible to apply.

The funding comes primarily from San Mateo County property taxes and is overseen by a board of trustees.

A complete list of organizations that were awarded funding can be found at peninsulahealthcaredistrict.org. Last year’s grantees are also listed on the healthcare district website, peninsulahealthcaredistrict.org. ■

Interim Portola Valley Planning Director Jon Biggs to depart in February

By Angela Swartz

Another crucial town staff position will soon be opening in Portola Valley amidst a rush to finish state-mandated housing plans.

Interim Portola Valley Planning and Building Director Jon Biggs leave the town in February, having

reached the maximum number of hours he can work for a public agency, he said in a Monday, Jan. 22, email to this news organization.

Town Council member Mary Hufty made the announcement of his departure in her Jan. 20 newsletter. Biggs told The Almanac that he doesn’t have a specific end

date, but he wants to make sure he still has enough hours left on his contract so he can help train the new director.

It’s a busy time in Portola Valley’s Planning Department, as it shepherds the town through the process of planning for the development of 253 new units during the current 2023-31 period of the

state Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) program. This is a staggering 295% increase from the 64 in the previous eight-year housing element cycle.

“I am hoping the housing element is certified by the state before Jan. 31, 2024,” said Biggs, who previously served as the community development director in Los Altos and as an interim community development director for the city of Gilroy. “The community, Town Council, Planning Commission, town manager, town attorney, and our consultant team along with town staff have all been working very hard at trying to address each new request by HCD (Housing and Community Development department), while being mindful of the special nature of Portola Valley. It has been a challenge and the state’s efforts to shoehorn housing into this community do not reflect the characteristics that

make this a unique place.”

The town released its fourth stab at a compliant housing element on Dec. 1, but the state requested more edits on this plan from the town on Jan. 8.

A number of Portola Valley town staffers have left their posts over the last year, while the town is under pressure to get its housing element certified by the state. The exodus began with former town manager Jeremy Dennis, who departed in March 2023 who joined the town in 2016.

Biggs replaced Planning Director Laura Russell, who departed on Sept. 22, 2023 after five years with the town.

Pay for the position is listed as between \$170,000-\$222,000, depending on qualifications.

Applications are due on Feb. 4 by 11:59 p.m.

View the job posting at tinyurl.com/PVplanningdirectoropening. ■

Menlo Park Yearly Market Report

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023

TOP 10 SALES*					
1. \$11,900,000 1177 Johnson Street	2. \$11,100,000 1205 Johnson Street	3. \$10,700,000 1795 Bay Laurel Drive	4. \$9,175,000 953 Hobart Street	5. \$8,900,000 35 Hesketh Drive	6. \$8,880,000 1 Princeton Road
7. \$8,800,000 953 Hobart Street	8. \$8,258,000 53 Politzer Drive	9. \$8,200,000 455 San Mateo Drive	10. \$8,200,000 936 Hobart Street		

ACTIVE LISTING Y23: 438 (↑4%) Y22: 423	AVERAGE SALES PRICE Y23: \$3,411,701 (↑4%) Y22: \$3,266,847	AVERAGE SALES PRICE/SQ FT Y23: \$1,456 (↓7%) Y22: \$1,558
PENDING LISTING Y23: 304 (↓9%) Y22: 333	AVERAGE SOLD DAYS ON MARKET Y23: 27 (↑59%) Y22: 17	MONTHS OF INVENTORY Y23: 1.90 (↑111%) Y22: 0.90 <small>*If no further homes/condos were to come to market, the area would be SOLD OUT of residential real estate in the number of MONTHS shown</small>
SOLD LISTING Y23: 297 (↓13%) Y22: 341	SALE/LIST PRICE Y23: 100.80% (↓3%) Y22: 104.20%	30 YEAR MORTGAGE RATE Y23: 6.90% (↑2%) Y22: 6.74% <small>12/08/2022 6.74% 12/22/2023 6.90% Source: Bankrate</small>

*Year 2023 compared to Year 2022

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

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OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Jeffrey Schneiderman, 55, a Woodside resident who grew up in Portola Valley, graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School and spent time traveling the world and spent time as a political volunteer for social justice, on Jan. 11.

Carol Weber, 78, a Palo Alto resident who had worked as a school social worker in the Detroit area before coming to California and launching a career as a real estate loan officer, and who spent free time reading, working on crafting and quilting projects and chronicling genealogy, on Jan. 10.

Monica Egger, 82, who was born and raised in Switzerland before coming to Palo Alto, later working at the Hyatt Cabana and Hyatt Ricky’s, and who was an active member of Peninsula Swiss Club, on Dec. 31.

Luther Heydon, 84, who served in the U.S. Navy as a computer specialist before launching a career with IBM in roles including an advisor in Saigon during the Vietnam War, and in retirement became a Notary Public and did volunteer work, on Jan. 3.

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



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LESSON

continued from page 1

classroom, she is concerned the lesson was inaccurate, outside the realm of the California Education Code's curriculum and had an anti-Semitic bias. Her goal is to inform and educate the public, Lee said.

Images of a puppet on strings and a map of Palestine's territory shrinking over the decades were pictured on the lesson plan and noted as offensive by multiple community members like Noah Glaser, who said the lesson appeared one-sided and inaccurate.

"The imagery of the Jewish puppet master controlling the world was just one of the images that was unironically displayed in this one-sided lesson that essentially reduced millions of people," Glaser said.

While Gentile-Montgomery said she apologizes for the image of the "puppet master" on the lesson's slide, she said it was a lesson created by another teacher who taught a more extended version.

"I didn't look at it close enough and see how that would relate, but in no way was I trying to say Israelis control the media or anything like

that," Gentile-Montgomery said. "It was more an image of people in power, but I feel bad for that and could see how that can be misconstrued."

She added that she doesn't need to turn in a weekly lesson plan to be reviewed, and she is free to teach the curriculum as she feels fits best.

'Publicly attacked'

During the Wednesday meeting, multiple people mentioned that other teachers weren't scrutinized to the same degree as Gentile-Montgomery, attributing her treatment as unfair because she is Black.

Gentile-Montgomery echoed those comments, adding that she is the only Black credentialed teacher at the school.

Instead, students like Ebony Freeman said she is disappointed in the school's administration for not sticking up for Gentile-Montgomery when they have stuck up for other teachers accused of worse behavior.

"I am standing on behalf of my teacher, who I have watched be bullied, cyberattacked, stalked and overall not defended by almost everyone in the community and it makes me sick," Freeman

said. "If you feel offended by the slides, that is your right, and I will not stop you from expressing yourself. However, there is a line that all of you have crossed, and that can not be defended."

In November, Gentile-Montgomery said she was harassed incessantly via e-mail, her school mailbox and was surprised by "disturbing images" that were posted outside her classroom.

Colleague Melissa Díaz, who teaches ethnic studies at Sequoia High School and also helps develop the ethnic studies curriculum for the district, said she wrote a letter to support Gentile-Montgomery. The letter received more than 300 signatures, 140 of which come from staff and alums of the district, Díaz said.

"We ask the board to make a public statement that condemns the harassment of teachers and develop a protocol to support when teachers are being publicly attacked," Díaz said. "The message, absent a statement from the board of administration, is that teachers shouldn't teach lessons on Israel or Palestine out of fear of retribution from community members with political agendas. This sets a

dangerous precedent for our ability to engage students and current events and threatens our ability to prepare students to participate in a democracy."

When asked to comment on the circumstances surrounding the controversy, Arthur Wilkie, SUSHD public information officer, did not address the question. Instead, he said the district is dedicated to educating the nearly 9,000 students it serves in the community.

Gentile-Montgomery took a leave of absence from teaching on Nov. 20 for mental health reasons. She said she plans to return to work when she feels safe.

"I just miss my kids," Gentile-Montgomery said.

The Oct. 7 Hamas attack killed around 1,200 people and captured about 250 hostages, most of whom were civilians, according to the Associated Press.

The AP reported on Jan. 15 that 100 days into the war, Palestinian officials said the death toll in the area has surpassed 24,000. ■

Email Staff Writer Nicholas Mazzoni at nmazzoni@rwcpulse.com.

MENLO HOUSING

continued from page 5

Smith said. It covers "a range of actions from supporting affordable-housing development to encouraging housing for special-needs populations and promoting sustainable and resilient housing."

Jeremy Levine, policy manager for the nonprofit organization Housing Leadership Council of San Mateo County, applauded Menlo Park for its work on the plan and reaching this juncture.

"This housing element has a lot of really good policies," Levine said, addressing the council. "We are excited for you to approve it and get to work implementing the vision that you have laid out and your staff have laid out. We really appreciated the opportunity to work together with the city on developing this plan, and we're excited to continue working together with the city to implement it."

So far out of the 21 jurisdictions in San Mateo County, only Redwood City, South San Francisco and Brisbane have fully state-certified housing elements.

Email Contributing Writer Neil Gonzales at ngonzales92@yahoo.com.

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KALLY

continued from page 5

Instead, the Portola Valley-based brand is made from the juice of unripened grapes. Though this direction wasn't clear when Katie and Scott Mitic first approached creating a wine alternative, it's now one of the primary points that sets them apart from other brands in the category.

At first glance, Kally looks like many popular small-producer, low-alcohol and minimal-intervention wines on the market. With a colorful, abstract label, Kally could easily sit beside these brands, yet you won't find it next to them. Instead, you'll find it residing with other alcohol-free alternatives.

With a modern aesthetic (heavy glass bottle, thoughtful messaging and beautiful label), Kally's goal is to attract anyone who enjoys a "wine-like" experience, regardless of one's relationship with alcohol.

Katie Mitic addressed the "Can you appeal to everyone" question and said, "The interesting thing about the nonalcoholic market is that approximately 85% to 95% of the consumers buying nonalcoholic products also buy alcoholic products, according to research. This is a market of moderation and our target customer is the moderating drinker. These are people who are changing their relationship with alcohol and choosing to drink less. It's happening across all age groups and is fundamentally a wellness movement."

She loves the fact that their alcohol consumption is down by around 80% and admittedly realizes that there are easier ways to reduce one's alcohol intake than creating a nonalcoholic product. And, as longtime wine drinkers, they knew that to create a suitable substitute, they had to understand winemaking fundamentals.

Because Kally starts with grapes, they monitor sugar and pH levels like any other winemaker and harvest about a month before winemakers for more acid. Depending on the product, Kally uses either chardonnay or cabernet sauvignon grapes grown in the Sonoma AVA (American Viticultural Area).

Once the grapes are pressed, they take the verjus and add botanicals, fruit juice, tea and other extracts to create a beverage that has an aroma, mouthfeel and texture similar to wine.

Experimentation for new products takes place in the couple's Portola Valley home kitchen. "We love to explore the canvas of flavor, and wine lovers comment that they love the mouthfeel that Kally brings. We're harvesting our grapes when they have wine characteristics that we can expand on," said Katie Mitic.



Courtesy Kally

Katie and Scott Mitic of Portola Valley are the founders of Kally.

To keep up with demand, the Mitics can freeze freshly pressed verjus and use it throughout the year. "Because of its acidity, verjus freezes incredibly well, so unlike winemakers that have to deal with allocations, we're able to produce Kally year-round. It's what we technologists like to do. Launch a product, see how customers react and then adjust, which keeps us close to them and the market," she said.

Seasonality plays a big part in Kally's journey. Currently, the Mitics are playing with fruits with acidity and minerality for their spring 2024 release. "We're macerating lemon verbena and shiso in verjus, which will add great complexity to some of the products we're working on," Katie Mitic said.

The brand is in a growth phase, and she hopes to engage with more local retailers and restaurants in the coming months. Besides being available for purchase on their website and through GoodEggs, the Mitics self-distribute to some of their favorite Peninsula spots like Roberts Market and Bianchini's Market in Portola Valley, Woodside's Village Pub and Menlo Park's Flea Street.

"We love getting to know our customers and building relationships," Katie Mitic said. "We love engaging with our digital customers, but we also want you to be able to find Kally in your local market."

Website: drinkkally.com, Instagram: [@drinkkally](https://www.instagram.com/drinkkally). ■

*Email Contributing Writer
Sophia Markoulakis at
sophiamarkoulakis@gmail.com.*

LEHUA GREENMAN



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PUBLIC HEARING

1. 127 Hillside Drive

VARI2023-0005

Daniel Vargas, AKD Homes

Project Planner: Sarah Filipe, Associate Planner

Presentation and approval, conditional approval, or denial of a proposal to construct a new Accessory Dwelling Unit located as close as 4 feet to the side property line and 10 feet to the rear property line as permitted by State law. The project requires approval of a Variance to height limits for the ADU to have plate heights exceeding the 11-foot plate height maximum and 17-foot overall height maximum allowed for accessory structures (VARI2023-0005).

The project is Categorically Exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to §15303(a), which includes a second dwelling unit in a residential zone.

THE APPLICATION MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW BY CONTACTING SARAH FILIPE AT SFILIPE@WOODSIDETOWN.ORG

ETHNIC STUDIES

continued from page 10

to speak about the harassment towards my colleague Chloe, which includes anonymous emails calling her names, posters placed on her door, and inappropriate materials placed in her mailbox disguised as a holiday present. I fear that I am next in line for harassment. I've asked the district and site admin what they will do to keep us safe and there has been no commitment to act."

Woodside history teacher Gregory Gruszynski said: "I stand in solidarity with my colleague at Menlo-Atherton High School: I am a white man who has been teaching about Israel and Palestine for over two decades and have never faced this level of harassment."

Pablo Aguilera, a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) partner at the district said: "Every educator in this district has taught a lesson, regardless of intent, that has caused harm, yet were given the grace to grow. Why are we not giving her the same room to grow? Why are we doing the opposite with Montgomery?"

Many parents refuted the accusations of racism.

Parent Ken Rutsky said, "We will not be quiet. This is not racism. This has nothing to do with Ms. Montgomery's race."

Some also prefaced their comments by saying that they did not know Gentile-Montgomery's race. A parent said, "I want to make it clear that I was completely unaware of the teacher's



Courtesy Arden Margulis / M-A Chronicle

Teachers brought signs to a Jan. 17 meeting showing support for M-A ethnic studies teacher Chloe Gentile-Montgomery, who is on personal leave.

race and it's got nothing to do with why I'm here today."

This is not the first SUHSD board meeting to feature disruptions from the audience, but it is the first where the board President took such an active role in quieting the audience. Both board President Shawneece Stevenson and Associate Superintendent Bonnie Hanson, at separate times during the meeting, went into the audience to comfort a student and defuse conflicts. During the course of the meeting, the crowd frequently interrupted with clapping, cheering, and booing, all of

which are against board policy.

One instance, in particular, involving an M-A student and community member incited a heated argument amongst the audience and culminated in a staff member calling the police.

The student held up a sign that reportedly read, "Let's not forget that the IDF (Israel Defense Forces) lied about the beheading of babies," and in response a community member confronted the student and took a photo of them, causing the student to leave the room in tears and, as the audience erupted into arguments, the board to go into recess. Woodside teacher Julie Marten said: "Earlier in the meeting, the community member was very agitated and harassing speakers visually."

As the community member attempted to speak, Stevenson repeatedly talked over him, saying: "No, no, we are not doing this," in order to quiet the room and addressed the community member directly, emphasizing: "This is the board's meeting."

She said, "I am asking you to be a model for our students. (The student) is under 18. I am not justifying anybody but we are not treating our students like this," and the crowd quieted. Some audience members called for his removal but Stevenson walked away. A defender of the audience member yelled out, "This isn't the

place for students." The community member also tried to speak after public comments.

During the recess, a microphone was accidentally left unmuted on the Zoom meeting, and two staff members could be overheard discussing that the police were called. However, the police never entered the meeting.

Sequoia District Teachers Association President Edith Salvatore addressed both the concerns of Jewish parents and the treatment of Gentile-Montgomery.

"I want to remind the board that over the last handful of years, I've stood here and told you that it is difficult to be a Jewish student and a Jewish educator in this school district," Salvatore said.

She then addressed the lesson: "People can make mistakes: a slideshow is not a lesson; it must be taken in the context of what happened in the classroom. Intent and impact are different, both are important, and both should be respected. When errors are made, criticism is vital and corrections and reteaching is always possible."

She continued: "Anonymous community members have targeted a singular teacher, ignoring that she is also a human being. I've been the recipient of anonymous and not-so-anonymous attacks by community members who disagree with comments during board meetings. That board did not protect me then. It hurts me that our district has not learned how to handle these issues better."

Salvatore called out the administration for not handling the issue better.

"Let me be clear; the fact that we are here today having heard over an hour of passionate speakers is a result of administrative failure," Salvatore said. "The administration has failed to protect a teacher from harassment and equally has failed to communicate to parents that there has been a recognition that the slideshow was flawed, and a willingness to reteach."

She then called on the board to publicly support teachers who teach complex, contemporary topics, and give them the opportunity to acknowledge their mistakes without fear of harassment. ■

This story originally appeared in the M-A Chronicle.

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

continued from page 6

City of Menlo Park seeks community feedback on shuttle service

The city of Menlo Park has opened a survey to analyze how to better connect the community to transit, shopping and jobs while maintaining cost-efficiency and maximizing ridership.

The survey can be found online at menlopark.gov and asks for community feedback on potential scenarios aimed at improving the shuttle service. Paper surveys will be available at pop-up events which are listed on the same page under "Community Outreach."

Portola Valley opens applications for Architectural and Site Control Commission

The Portola Valley town council is looking for three volunteers to serve on their Architectural and Site Control Commission (ASCC). The commission is responsible for the review and approval of site development permits and design review applications.

Those who are interested in applying can email a letter of interest to Interim Planning and Building Director Jon Biggs at jbiggs@portolavalley.net. Applications are due by 5 p.m. on Jan. 31 and interviews will be conducted by the Town Council the week of Feb. 5.

For more information contact Biggs.

—Jennifer Yoshikoshi

ATHERTON HOUSING

continued from page 8

“I do believe we should use the fees in certain areas to, like we’ve talked before, encourage development (that are) following processes,” Council member Bill Widmer said. “We need to make sure that we do that.”

Among the fees the council zeroed in on Wednesday night were those pertaining to ADU and JADU planning permits.

A consultant’s study recommended setting the planning permit fee for ADUs at \$2,516 and JADUs at \$778, according to a town staff report.

However, the council supported charging nothing in either case. But those who do not comply with the town’s setback standards would pay \$1,722 for the ADU planning permit, according to City Manager George Rodericks.

For fences, the council favored a fee of \$675 instead of the study’s recommendation of \$986.

But for landscape screening, the council preferred going from \$389 to \$518.

“I don’t think that’s a big burden,” Widmer said.

Raising certain fees brings “the money to cover the cost of things,” he said. “Some of our fees need to be changed and brought into line.”

Part of the reason behind the suggested fee increases now is that the town did not make previous adjustments over a period of time, Rodericks said. “But number two, the processes for processing applications have become far more complicated in the last 10 years.”

Council member Stacy Holland noted that the town is exploring ways to improve those procedures. “The staff is working on it, reviewing our process to see if there are ways that we could streamline it,” she said.

Addressing the council, resident Carol Flaherty described the experience of taking out building permits as “an unreasonable, burdensome process with review after review. It’s ridiculous.”

Flaherty also suggested that the council get additional community feedback on the proposed fee revisions before it considers their adoption.

“I urge you to defer this to the next City Council meeting to give people that actually have some knowledge a chance to actually provide some input,” she said.

The council did decide to continue its review of the fees to Feb. 21. ■

*Email Contributing Writer
Neil Gonzales at
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BOUNDARY

continued from page 8

major concerns or anything. Nothing has come our way to make us weary of the shift,” Gracia said. “It’s being well received. Staff will communicate the outcome of tonight’s decision to the community.”

Gracia added that the demographer anticipated the possibility of an increase in the neighborhood of 10-20 new students enrolling per year, accumulating over time. This means about 50-100 new students would

potentially come from the impacted area that is now part of the Oak Knoll School zone within five years.

Another reason the district said it felt the need to change zoning was for safety reasons, saying students would have shorter walks and safer routes to school under the new boundaries.

Enrollment for the 2024-25 school year begins on Feb. 1. ■

*Email Contributing
Writer Joshua Picazo at
joshuadpicazo@gmail.com.*

Jeffrey Allen Schneiderman

August 15, 1968 – January 11, 2024

Eldest son of Barbara (Lotz) Schneiderman, (deceased), Darlene Heath, stepmother, and Arthur Schneiderman; big brother to Jonathan, Jason, Jenny and Julie; a favorite uncle to Kylie, Kaelan, Chance, Liam, Finn, Jenna and Jett; raised in Portola Valley, a graduate of Menlo-Atherton High School and Humboldt State University; an adventurous traveler who traveled the world and engaged in political volunteering for social justice. A friend to all and loved by all. Jeff will be thoroughly and deeply missed.



PAID OBITUARY

Gordon Russell

May 16, 1933 – November 25, 2023

In a room filled with family and classical music, Gordon W. Russell, beloved patriarch, philanthropist and humanist died peacefully on November 25 after a short illness. He is survived by his wife, Bettina McAdoo; his son Justin Russell; his stepsons Gregor and Patrick Robertson, and Miles and Anders Pedersen and their families.

Son of Anne and Leonard Russell, Gordon was raised in Arlington, Mass. He learned to skate on Spy Pond and at age 14 sold hot dogs at Fenway Park in Boston where he saw many of the greats, including Jackie Robinson.

Gordon was recruited to play hockey at Dartmouth College where he majored in history and was a member of Casque and Gauntlet, Phi Gamma Delta, Newman Club and AFROTC.

After serving in the electronics division of the Air Force, he worked at Sprague Electric in Massachusetts. Gordon was brought to California by Fairchild Semiconductor. He then held leadership roles in several biomedical companies and joined The Capital Group. His Fairchild and Capital Group colleague Don Valentine recruited Gordon to be his first partner at Sequoia Capital, where he developed the healthcare and biotech divisions of the venture capital firm.

After 20 years at Sequoia, Gordon decided he could do more for others in the non-profit sector. His statement that “it is easier to make money than give it away” reflected his commitment to purposeful philanthropy. He focused on causes that reflected his dedication to community needs, including health care, education and environment.

Among his major gifts to his alma mater Dartmouth College were endowments to the Native American Program, an athletic excellence fund, the Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning and an academic chair at the medical school where he served for 10 years as Chair of the Board of Overseers. He also served on the Native American Visiting Committee. For his many contributions to Dartmouth, he received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters.

Gordon credited his mother for his love of reading and honored her by creating the Anne A. Russell Trust Fund to support special services and programs for children at the Robbins Library in Arlington. Gordon’s appreciation of literature continued throughout his life and inspired him to co-found the Sun Valley Writers Conference in Sun Valley, Idaho, where Gordon had a home. Gordon also served on the boards of the St. Luke’s Wood River (Hospital) Foundation and The Sun Valley Community School.

Closer to home, Gordon served as Chairman of the Board at both the Peninsula Community Foundation and the Palo Alto Medical Foundation where he helped fund

and named the Joseph Davis/Esther Clark Pediatric Department and the Hewlett Lee Surgery Center. He also was on the boards of Community Impact and the Carnegie Institute for the Advancement of Teaching. In a nod to his sons’ environmental work, he joined the board and supported the Woodwell Climate Research Center.



No organization captured his heart more than the Ravenswood Family Health Center, the East Palo Alto provider of free or low-cost health care to the uninsured or underinsured. As the only non-community member of the board, Gordon worked with the clinic from its infancy through the building of a new state-of-the-art facility. He named the Pediatric wing after his wife, a pediatrician.

Throughout his life Gordon enjoyed sports, most recently golf and paddling Hawaiian outrigger canoes with the Kawaihae Canoe Club. He indulged his lifelong passion for hockey by buying a minority interest in the San Jose Sharks and attending their games, turning his wife into an enthusiastic fan.

In addition to his extensive philanthropy and community service, Gordon supported a wide array people personally as a mentor, investor, advisor, or wise elder. His door was always open, his counsel was candid and compassionate. A humble but powerful leader whether in the boardroom or around the family table, Gordon always listened carefully to what everyone wanted to contribute before asking the insightful question or cutting to the main issue. He lived by his philosophy—and inspired others—to give of their “time, talent, and treasure.”

Nothing was more important to Gordon than family. He influenced the lives of his boys and large extended family with wisdom and gentle guidance. At the time of his passing, he was looking forward to spending Thanksgiving and Christmas with family and walking hand in hand with his grandson, as he’d done with his five older grandchildren. He was eager to meet his newest granddaughter and spend more time with his great granddaughter.

Gordon lived a full and happy life. He will be remembered for the twinkle in his eye, his warm smile, a ready joke—and most of all for his fierce loyalty and generous, unconditional love. But the real test for him, he said, was “When I ask myself if I have helped make life better for one person that day and the answer is yes, then I have done what my mother would have wanted me to do.”

In lieu of flowers, and in keeping with Gordon’s philanthropic spirit, the family asks that you give to one of the many causes that he supported throughout his life including Ravenswood Family Health Center and the Hawaii Community Foundation.

A celebration of Gordon’s life will be held in the spring.

PAID OBITUARY

Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

‘What’s going on’

The stage is set for the 13th annual concert by the African American Composer Initiative

By Ashwini Gangal

In 1971, when soul singer Marvin Gaye asked America “What’s Going On?” he echoed the socio-political disillusionment of the times.

Gaye’s timeless album is an eponym for the upcoming 13th annual concert organized by the African American Composer Initiative (AACI), a group that’s on a mission to bring the work of African American composers, living and deceased, back into public consciousness.

This year’s concert will be held on Jan. 27 and 28 at the usual East Palo Alto venue — the Performing Arts Center of Eastside College Preparatory School.

All proceeds from ticket sales will go directly to the school, which is a private, all-scholarship establishment that prepares first-generation students from low-income households for college.

“It’s a gem in the community,” said retired Judge LaDoris Cordell, co-founder of the AACI, about the school. “That place is our anchor.” It’s where the group holds two concerts once a year, always in the last weekend of January.

The concert will feature 18 performers, including Bay Area jazz and classical musicians as well as two jazz artists from New York — pianist Valerie Capers and bassist John Robinson.

Some of the musicians choose to donate their services, but through its fundraising efforts the AACI pays its tech staff and gives honoraria to the performers.

The AACI became a group in 2010.

The seeds, however, were sown a few years before that: It all

started when Cordell, met her old friend, the piano, while leading a children’s choir in one of the churches in East Palo Alto, where she practiced law after graduating from Stanford. She credits celebrated basketball coach Tara VanDerveer, with whom she shares a Stanford connection, for putting her in touch with AACI co-founder Josephine “Jodi” Gandolfi, at a social event around 2003-04.

It was around the time Cordell was thinking about getting back to playing the piano. Gandolfi, who was already teaching VanDerveer, took Cordell on as a student too. Four years into their lessons, Cordell asked Gandolfi a question that became the foundation of what is now the AACI: “Aren’t there any Black composers?”

Sure there were, but unfortunately their names and music had faded into oblivion. “I heard that question and drew a complete blank,” said Gandolfi. “Other than Scott Joplin, I hadn’t heard of any African American composers of piano music.” And this was despite her long education in music history.

“I said ‘I’ll get back to you on that’ and started to look into it,” she said. And thus began her journey of discovering all the fantastic concert music by African American composers, starting with greats like William Grant Still.

Then in 2009, Gandolfi got a call from the Palo Alto Art Center asking if she’d like to do a concert, filling in for someone who had canceled at the last minute. She agreed, and included a lot of the work of Still that she’d been

uncovering at the time, along with music by Debussy, Brahms, and Gershwin.

“The audience was thrilled,” she said, about the concert, that less than five members had managed to string together; it comprised a lot of piano music, vocal music, spirituals and art songs. “That was the beginning.”

“We determined it was time to present more music by these wonderful African American composers that we’d been discovering,” she said. The following year, they held the first concert at Eastside College Prep, current venue of the event, and decided to make it a benefit for the school.

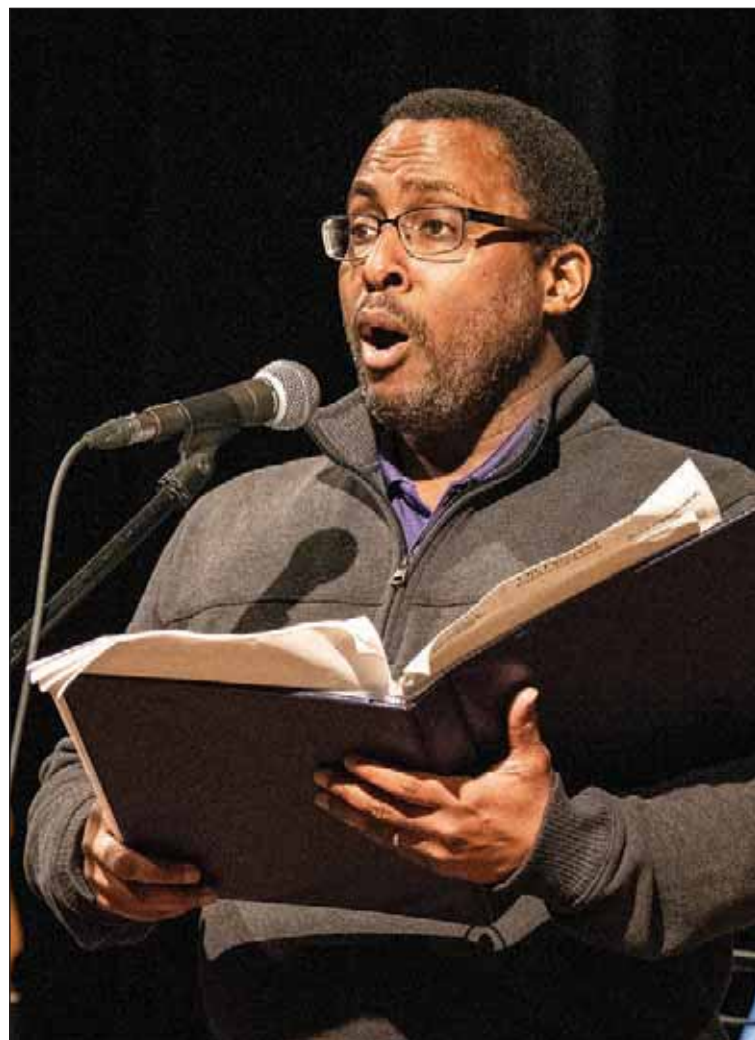
“When Jodi pulled me in on this journey to find out about the music of African American composers, I don’t know why I was shocked. This country has so much of racism built into every institution,” said Cordell. “That part of the music establishment is just excluded, deemed to be unimportant, irrelevant, not good enough.”

Things are changing thanks to the work the group is doing, though.

“Part of the journey is finding this music, because much of it has not been published,” said Gandolfi, who takes a rigorous scholarly approach to combing the archives — for instance, the Center for Black Music Research at Chicago and the Library of Congress at DC — for African American music.

Many of these collections of music are in manuscript form. “A lot of background work has to happen to bring some of this music alive,” she added.

The process of selecting the right music for the annual concert is an education in itself. One of the piano pieces on this year’s program is by John Wesley Work III. “In doing this work we’ve discovered that he came from a family of musicians. His grandfather was a freed slave,” said Gandolfi. The family had deep ties with Fisk University, training ground for the glorious Fisk Jubilee Singers. “It’s a quest to uncover historical figures, facts



Courtesy Deanne Tucker

Othello Jefferson, tenor, in rehearsal for the AACI concert.

that have been buried for a very long time.”

After the killing of George Floyd in 2020, a lot of musicians and institutions have been waking up to the problems of racism in music and have been programming, recording and publishing work by Black musicians. “There is change that’s coming about, but there is so much work to be done,” Gandolfi said.

Like a lot of offline events, this one too took a break for two years during the pandemic but, during that time, the organizers produced a CD (“Good News”) of past live performances, which features the work of tenor Othello Jefferson, who has been associated with the AACI since 2017.

For Jefferson, participation is a chance to connect with music that represents the African American experience. “The thing that makes it really cool is to experience and share music that’s connected to your culture,” he said, delighting in the range of styles covered by the AACI over the years — gospel, operatic, art, folk and jazz music, to name a few. “African Americans are not just a monolith — it’s not just one group or just one example of music; all the genres are represented.”

This time, some of the genres the audience will be treated to include jazz, R&B, a piece in Swahili, music related to African roots and, of course, spirituals and hymn-based music — which used to be a staple of African American compositions early on, the kind that masters like Harry

T. Burleigh helped document in the 1800s.

“The breadth is massive,” said Jefferson. “There’s more to African American music than the ones that people see the most,” like rap and hip hop.

Clearly, this event is more than just the music. “It’s more than just people coming to a concert and sitting down for two hours. It’s more than just getting up and singing. It’s more than just sending out flyers and getting people to come,” he said.

Through its concerts, the AACI has helped subvert stereotypes that surround both African American music as well as the city of East Palo Alto.

Though the focus of the concert is on bringing songs from the archives to life on stage, calling them “covers” is a touch reductive, not least because that’s a term used more in the context of popular music. “I wouldn’t call them ‘covers’ — for me, that’s more related to pop music or music outside of the classical realm,” Jefferson clarified. “To me this is our rendition of — or our performance of — someone else’s work.” ■

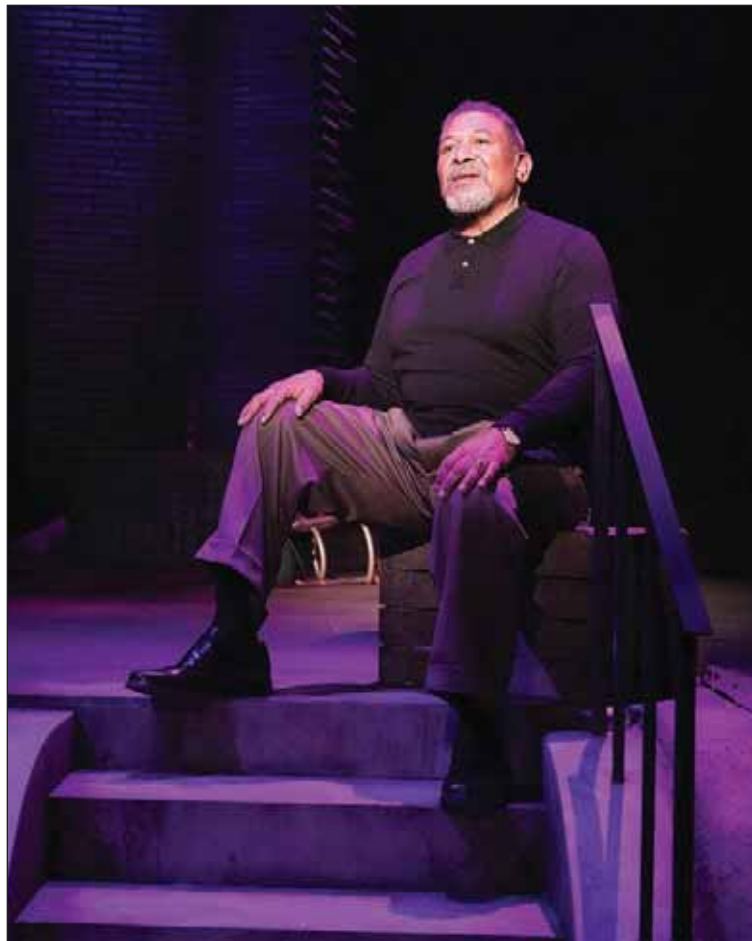
Email Contributing Writer
Ashwini Gangal at
ashwinigangal@gmail.com.



Courtesy Eric Lutkin

The 2019 AACI concert at Eastside College Preparatory School.

The African American Composers Initiative Concert takes place Jan. 27-28, 3 p.m. at Eastside College Preparatory School, 1041 Myrtle St., East Palo Alto. \$5-\$20. aacinitiative.org/concerts.



Courtesy Jenny Graham

Steven Anthony Jones personifies playwright August Wilson in the solo show “How I Learned What I Learned,” presented by TheatreWorks Silicon Valley. Jones is seen here performing the role at Oregon Shakespeare Festival.

TheatreWorks stages August Wilson memoir

By Heather Zimmerman

THEATER REVIEW

It's not often that an autobiographical one-man show can really live on after its creator, but August Wilson's “How I Learned What I Learned” still feels vital and to-the-minute contemporary nearly 20 years after the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright's death.

Steven Anthony Jones gives a magnificent performance as Wilson in TheatreWorks Silicon Valley's production of the theatrical memoir, running through Feb. 3 in Mountain View. By the show's end, it's hard not to have a strong sense that you've spent an evening listening to Wilson share his recollections, because Jones fully becomes the role. He brings a personal spark to Wilson's poetic way with words and powerful storytelling.

“How I Learned What I Learned” offers a chance to understand Wilson better as a person through stories largely from his youth and young adulthood in the 1960s and '70s. It's also something of a guide to the neighborhood where he grew up and that was so central to many of his plays: Pittsburgh's Hill District. The people and places of The Hill come to life in Wilson's stories.

Wilson shares memories and unvarnished truths, from his early jobs and romantic relationships to encounters over a lifetime informed by the racism built into in American society's structure.

This production was originally presented by Oregon Shakespeare Festival and directed by Tim Bond, OSF artistic director and TheatreWorks' former artistic director. Bond, who knew Wilson both personally and professionally, is known as one of the foremost interpreters of his works.

His direction underscores a sense of warmth and personal connection throughout the show. ■

Read the complete review and see more local theater and other arts coverage at almanacnews.com/arts-culture.

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

“How I Learned What I Learned” runs through Feb. 3 at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Tickets start at \$27. theatreworks.org.

Worth a Look



Courtesy Amanda Lopez Photography

Effie Zilch plays Jan. 26 at Feldman's Books.

Effie Zilch

Feldman's Books hosts an evening of local music with rootsy rock duo Effie Zilch (Steve Wyreman and Evanne Barcenas) returning for an in-store performance (proceeds will go to East Palo Alto's Redtone Records, according to Feldman's event website). Wyreman and Barcenas are longtime collaborators who've been playing together since their youth. Opening acts include singer-songwriter Rory McNamara, performing Irish and American songs, and light jazz group The Chris Sor Jazz Combo, made up of Stanford University physics students.

Jan. 26, 4-7:30 p.m., Feldman's Books, 1075 Curtis St., Menlo Park, \$25, feldmansbooks.net/events.

Mike Chen

Peninsula sci-fi and fantasy author Mike Chen writes novels with far-out frameworks but character and relationship-driven stories (and, usually, local settings). His latest book, “A Quantum Love Story,” focuses on the growing bond between two strangers who are caught up in a time loop stemming from a bizarre incident at a Bay Area particle accelerator. A New York Times bestselling writer, Chen's other books include “Star Wars: Brotherhood,” “Here and Now and Then,” “Vampire Weekend,” “We Could Be Heroes,” “Light Years From Home,” and “A Beginning At The End.” He'll appear in conversation with fellow author Kristin Baver at Books Inc, Palo Alto.

Jan. 30 at 7 p.m., Books Inc. Palo Alto, 855 El Camino Real #74, booksinc.net.

‘Meerkats — The Musical’

Maybe you've seen “The Lion King” or “Meerkat Manor?” Well, get ready for the next big meerkats in show business. Palo Alto Children's Theatre presents a world-premiere new musical, inspired by the real-life meerkats in residence at the nearby Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo. “Meerkats — The Musical” was written by Gary Wright and Deborah Wicks La Puma

and features a trio of singing meerkats learning about friendship and acceptance.

Jan. 26-Feb. 12, Palo Alto Children's Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, \$17, cityofpaloalto.org.

Kronos Quartet

Kronos Quartet, the renowned San Francisco string quartet known for its interesting collaborations and genre-blending-and-bending sounds, has been around now for a half century. To celebrate its 50 years, the group (David Harrington and John Sherba on violin, Hank Dutt on viola and Paul Wiancko on cello) will present its “Five Decades” program, including signature pieces plus a new commission. Movement artist Eiko Otake and vocalist-harmonium player Mariana Sadovska will join as special guests. After the concert there will be a post-performance talk — “Artists Respond to Climate Change and Nuclear Disaster” — moderated by Kyoko Sato, the associate director of Stanford University's Program in Science, Technology and Society.

Jan. 27 at 7:30 p.m., Bing Concert Hall, 327 Lasuen St., Stanford, \$15-\$64, live.stanford.edu.

Food & Drink



A slate of eateries shut down as 2023 ended and the new year began

Top row photos by Michelle Le, Sammy Dallal, Elena Kadvany, Adrienne Mitchel. Bottom row photos by Ashley Higashi, Michelle Le, Courtesy Molly DeCoudreaux, Courtesy Son & Garden via Facebook.

By Adrienne Mitchel

A mix of longtime and newer Peninsula eateries closed as 2023 ended and the new year began. From a deli that served lunchtime crowds since 1995 to a craft beer store offering a variety of brews since 2012, here are 12 spots that will soon close or recently closed (including two that are reopening in new locations).

SALVAJE/FEAST AND FLORAL, PALO ALTO

The good news: It's not a long goodbye for the Palo Alto-based catering, table styling and floral design company.

Feast and Floral opened within the existing natural wine bar Salvaje in the summer of 2022. While Feast and Floral will have its last day of operation in Palo Alto Friday, Jan. 27, owner and Palo Alto native Ashley Higashi plans to reopen her business in early April in a larger storefront in Redwood City. Starting Feb. 1 until reopening in the Marsh Manor Shopping Center, Feast and Floral will accept orders for delivery only and will operate out of a commercial kitchen.

The bad news: It's a different story for wine bar Salvaje, which owner Kasim Syed confirmed will be permanently closing after the last service day on Friday because he wasn't able to renew the lease. Syed still operates Palo Alto Brewing Company, The Rose & Crown and QBB in Mountain View.

SON & GARDEN, MENLO PARK

The trendy and flower-filled brunch spot in Menlo Park offered its last brunch service Sunday. But don't be too sad — the San

Francisco and Palo Alto locations will continue to operate as usual.

"Born amidst the challenges of COVID, this temporary location has been a source of comfort and joy, thanks to your unwavering support," the restaurant posted to its Instagram on Jan. 18.

Son & Garden is a brunch concept created by the team behind Farmhouse Kitchen Thai Cuisine.

THE LIVIN ROOM, SAN CARLOS

The Livin Room was short-lived.

Closing less than a year after opening, this San Carlos-based bar and lounge offered an assortment of themed living room areas for guests to choose their desired atmosphere. Options included Gaming (which had an Xbox and a PlayStation), VIP, Sports, Vintage, Lodge and Victorian. It also offered Tuesday trivia nights.

PLAZA GOURMET DELICATESSEN, FOSTER CITY

After 35 years of serving up sandwiches, this Foster City-based mom-and-pop deli announced its permanent closure.

"It is with a heavy heart that we announce the closing of Plaza Gourmet. (economics) After 35 years of serving the good people of San Francisco and Foster City, we've decided it's time," reads a sign posted to the deli's door. "We want to thank all of the wonderful employees and customers we've gotten to know throughout the years. We appreciate your loyalty, patronage and wish you nothing but the best."

Pat Kelly, born and raised in the Bay Area, opened Plaza Gourmet in 1989 in San Francisco before moving his deli to Foster City in 1995. All meats were cooked in-house

and bread was delivered daily.

LIMA RUBY, PALO ALTO

The Peruvian restaurant served up its last helping of ceviche Jan. 7, about a year after replacing Burma Ruby on University Avenue in September 2022.

"We wanted to thank our amazing customers and staff for supporting Lima Ruby for the past year and half," Lima Ruby posted to its Instagram on Jan. 7. "We could not have done without your love and continued support. This is not a forever goodbye. Thanks again for your love and support that Lima Ruby Peruvian has received."

PASTA ARMELLINO, SARATOGA AND CUPERTINO

Michelin-starred chef Peter Armellino is down to one Pasta Armellino location. The original Saratoga location opened in 2018, the Cupertino restaurant followed two years after and the Campbell location opened a year after that. Now, only the Campbell location exists.

While Pasta Armellino's website lists the Cupertino location as closed, it still shows the Saratoga location as operating. A call to the Campbell location confirmed both the Cupertino and Saratoga locations are closed.

Pasta Armellino serves pasta made in-house and uses French, California, Japanese and Italian techniques.

Armellino still operates La Fondue and Michelin-starred The Plumed Horse, both in Saratoga.

SON & GARDEN, MENLO PARK

A sign for Tacos al Vapor Mexican Food now hangs above

the shuttered T4 in downtown Los Altos.

"To the wonderful community of Los Altos: Thank you for an unforgettable 5 years!" reads the sign posted on T4's door. "It has been a privilege for us to serve and get to know each of you. Stay tuned, as an amazing new business will be filling this space soon. Remember to continue supporting local businesses!"

Eric Fung and Shana Liu opened the Los Altos franchise of the Taiwanese boba shop in August 2018. Fung and Liu also own Hanabusa Cafe in Sunnyvale.

MIDICI NEAPOLITAN PIZZA, SAN MATEO

MidiCi served its last Neapolitan pizza Dec. 24 after five years operating out of Hillsdale Shopping Center.

"We are incredibly thankful for the support and loyalty you've shown us throughout the years," MidiCi posted to its Instagram Dec. 22. "Your smiles, stories and shared experiences have enriched our journey, and we cherish the memories created within these walls."

KILLINEY KOPITIAM, PALO ALTO

Singapore's oldest cafe left downtown Palo Alto Dec. 26 and is moving to Westfield Valley Fair spring 2024. The restaurant opened its Palo Alto location in September 2020 and offered fare like kaya toast (toast with butter and coconut jam), laksa (a spicy noodle dish) and sweet potato curry puffs.

"We look forward to hosting you again soon, serving the classics and specialties you loved at

our first Killiney Kopitiam," the business posted to its Instagram Dec. 27.

JANE'S BEER STORE, MOUNTAIN VIEW

Mountain View's artisan craft beer scene took a hit last month.

Since 2012, Jane's Beer Store offered a wide selection of beers from local, domestic and international breweries. Citing changes in consumer shopping behavior after the pandemic, the store had its last day of business Dec. 15.

"We would like to thank all of the amazing breweries and distributors that we've had the opportunity to work with over the years," the company posted to its Instagram Oct. 18. "They have consistently provided us with the best product spanning the entire globe ... It has been an honor to serve you, and we will cherish the memories and relationships we have built."

SARAH'S LATIN TASTE, SAN CARLOS

Citing economic challenges, owner Osvaldo Ebbes decided to close his Argentinian restaurant Sarah's Latin Taste. Ebbes, who grew up in Argentina, named the restaurant after his daughter.

"We have truly enjoyed serving food to everyone in this location but it has become too challenging in this economic environment," Ebbes posted to Sarah's Latin Taste's Instagram on Dec. 14. "Thanks for your support and friendship! Personally, I would like to say goodbye in person, but time has passed." ■

Email Food Editor
Adrienne Mitchel at
amitchel@almanacnews.com.

TOWN OF WOODSIDE
2955 Woodside Road
Woodside, CA 94062

THE TOWN INVITES YOU TO APPLY FOR APPOINTMENT AS PLANNING COMMISSIONER TO SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY BY REPRESENTING YOUR HOME DISTRICT.

**DISTRICTS 1 AND 3
WILL INITIALLY HAVE TERMS OF TWO YEARS.**

**DISTRICTS 2, 4, AND 5
WILL HAVE TERMS OF FOUR YEARS.**

DISTRICT MAP: <http://tinyurl.com/5n967ph4>

**Meetings are held on
the first and third Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.**

The Planning Commission participates in the administration of the planning laws and policies of the Town. It is responsible for recommending to the Town Council ordinances and resolutions necessary to implement the General Plan and adopted development policy. The Commission also conducts necessary public hearings to administer the planning laws and policies of the Town and acts upon applications for zoning amendments, conditional use permits, variances, subdivisions, and other related functions as may be assigned by the Council.

Interested residents are encouraged to check residency requirements, request information, and submit applications to the Town Clerk, Jennifer Li, by emailing: jli@woodsidetown.org.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, February 2, 2024, by 5:00 p.m.

**INTERVIEW AND APPOINTMENT BY TOWN COUNCIL:
Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 7:00 p.m.**



**TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
NOTICE OF PLANNING COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING**

Applicant: Martin Ramies

4170 and 4190 Alpine Road, File # PLN LLA 01-2022

A public meeting has been scheduled by the Town of Portola Valley's Planning Commission to conduct review of an application for a lot line adjustment. The affected parcels are APN 079-074-200 and 079-074-190, both owned by the applicant.

This project has been determined to be exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) per CEQA Guidelines Section 15305 (a), which specifically states a lot line adjustment is exempt when it does not result in creating any new parcel.

The Planning Commission will review and discuss the project during a hybrid in-person and Zoom videoconferencing public meeting on **Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at 7:00 PM**. You are invited to attend and provide written or verbal comments. Members of the public may attend virtually by utilizing the Zoom meeting info posted below, or in person at the Town's Historic School House, 765 Portola Road in Portola Valley. Written comments may also be submitted to Planning staff.

To Join Zoom Video Meeting:

Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.us) – Click Join a Meeting – Enter the Meeting ID

Meeting ID: 869 9354 8614

Passcode: 108385

To Phone into Zoom Meeting:

1-669-900-6833 Local

1-888-788-0099 Toll-free Enter same Meeting ID & Passcode

Remote Public Comments:

Public Hearings provide the general public and interested parties an opportunity to provide testimony on these items. If you challenge a proposed action(s) in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at a Public Hearing(s) described above, or in written correspondence delivered to the Town of Portola Valley at, or prior to, the Public Hearing(s).

Meeting participants are encouraged to submit public comments in writing in advance of the meeting. Please send an email to Jake Garcia, Consultant Planner at planning@portolavalley.net by 12:00 PM on the day of the meeting. Comments received by that time will be sent to the Planning Commission prior to the meeting. All received questions and comments will be included in the public record. Members of the public can ask questions/provide comments using the "raise your hand" feature in the Zoom platform.

The agenda and staff report will be posted on the Town's website by 5:00PM the Friday prior to the meeting at <https://www.portolavalley.net/town-government/planning-commission/minutes-and-agendas>.

Dated: January 17, 2024

Jon Biggs
Interim Planning and Building Director

Public Notices

STATEMENT OF ABANDONMENT OF USE OF FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME
File No. M-293711

The following person(s)/registrant(s) has/have abandoned the use of the fictitious business name(s). The information given below is as it appeared on the fictitious business statement that was filed at the County Clerk-Recorder's Office. FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME(S): WESTSIDE CHIROPRACTIC 190W 25TH AVE STE 4 SAN MATEO, CA 94403 FILED IN SAN MATEO COUNTY ON: 03/16/2023 REGISTRANT'S NAME(S): MICHAEL LUDOVICO CHIROPRACTIC, INC. 190 W 25TH AVE STE 4 SAN MATEO, CA 94403 THIS BUSINESS WAS CONDUCTED BY A Corporation. This statement was filed with the County Clerk Recorder of San Mateo County on December 07 2023. (ALM Jan 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2024)

PENINSULA FOOD SERVICES INC FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO.: M-296228 The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: 1.) PENINSULA FOOF SERVICES INC, located at 120 Glenn Way, Unit 6, San Carlos, CA 94070, San Mateo. Registered owner(s): PENINSULA FOOD SERVICE INC. 120 Glenn Wau, Unit 6 San Carlos, CA 94070 State of Incorporation/Organization: California This business is conducted by: a Corporation. 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 January 03, 2024. (ALM Jan 12, 19, 26 and Feb 2, 2024)

LA TAPATIA NEVERIA PALETERIA Y RASPADOS R&C FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO.: 296314 The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: 1.) LA TAPATIA NEVERIA PALETERIA Y RASPADOS R&C, located at 2398 University Ave, East Palo Alto, CA, 94303. Mailing Address: 443 Center Street, Redwood City, CA 94061. Registered owner(s): SEBASTIAN ESCOBEDO 443 Center St Redwood City, CA, 94061 State of Incorporation/Organization: CA This business is conducted by: an Individual. Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 1/1/23. This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 12, 2024. (ALM Jan 26, Feb 2, 9 and 16, 2024)

ELIO ACADEMY OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO.: M-296313 The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: 1.) ELIO ACADEMY OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES, located at 2108 N ST, STE N, SACRAMENTO, CA 95816, SAN MATEO COUNTY. Registered owner(s): SOL SCIENTIFIC LLC 2108 N ST, STE N SACRAMENTO, CA 95816 State of Incorporation/Organization: CA This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company. Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed

above on 01/12/2024. This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 13, 2024. (ALM Jan 19, 26, Feb 2 and 9, 2024)

TECH BIZ ADVISORS FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT FILE NO.: M-296263 The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as: 1.) TECH BIZ ADVISORS, located at 14 Somerset Ct, Belmont, CA 94002. Registered owner(s): LAURENT K. GHARDA 14 Somerset Ct Belmont, CA 94002 State of Incorporation/Organization: CA This business is conducted by: an Individual. Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 12/1/2023. This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on January 08, 2024. (ALM Jan 26, Feb 2, 9 and 16, 2024)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO Case No.: 23CIV06120 TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner: Cara Patricia Vistnes filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: CARA PATRICIA VISTNES TO CARA PATRICIA DOVE THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing. NOTICE OF HEARING: 03/04/2024, 9:00am, MC of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo, located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063. A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: ALMANAC Date: 01/04/2024 Hessen Ladcani JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT (ALM Jan 26, Feb 2, 9 and 16, 2024)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO Case No.: 24-CIV-00017 TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner: Juan Angel Almanza-Pulido filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: JUAN ANGEL ALMANZA-PULIDO TO JUAN ANGEL PULIDO THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

NOTICE OF HEARING: 03/11/2024, 9:00 AM, Superior Court Of San Mateo County of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo, located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063.

A copy of this ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: ALMANAC Date: 01/09/2024 Hessen Ladcani JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT (ALM Jan 26, Feb 2, 9 and 16, 2024)

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF: MARIA CLARA TOUYA Case No.: 23PR000680 To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both, of MARIA CLARA TOUYA. A Petition for Probate has been filed by: MARIA TOUYA MILLS in the Superior Court of California, County of SAN MATEO. The Petition for Probate requests that: MARIA TOUYA MILLS be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent. THE PETITION requests the decedent's will and codicils, if any, be admitted to probate. The will and any codicils are available for examination in the file kept by the court. THE PETITION requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority. A HEARING on the petition will be held on March 27 2024 at 9:00 AM in Dept 1 of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo, located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063. If you object to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney. If you are a creditor or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58 (b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code. Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law. You may examine the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk. Petitioner in Pro Per: Maria Touya Mills 17 Politzer Drive Menlo Park, CA 94025 650-218-7269 (ALM Jan 12, 19 and 26, 2024)

The Almanac is adjudicated to publish in San Mateo County.

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

The deadline is Sunday at 11:59 pm. Visit [AlmanacNews.com/legal_notices/](https://www.almanacnews.com/legal_notices/)

For assistance email LegalNotices@AlmanacNews.com.

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Prime Location in the Heart of Lindenwood | 6 beds | 2 offices | 5 full + 2 half baths | \$13,988,000 | 23Flood.com

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