

The Almanac

NONPROFIT LOCAL NEWS FOR THE MIDPENINSULA

MAY 15, 2026 | VOL. 61 NO. 36



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BTS fans to flood Stanford this weekend for return tour

Thousands of K-pop fans will flock to region for concerts
Saturday, Sunday and Tuesday

By Hannah Bensen

The BTS ARMY is mobilizing. This weekend and Tuesday evening, tens of thousands of fans will travel to Stanford University to see the K-pop band BTS perform for three days of sold-out shows. The concerts are expected to bring a euphoric wave of purple — the unofficial color of the group's fandom — an economic boost and increased traffic.

The internationally famous boyband from South Korea will play at Stanford's football stadium from 7 to 10 p.m. on May 16, May 17 and May 19.

BTS fans are called the ARMY, an acronym that stands for

Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth. The band is touring for the first time in nearly four years following a hiatus while members completed their mandatory military service.

"I hope it is a welcome opportunity for the community to celebrate and invite people into this beautiful place," said Iris Nemani, director of Stanford Live, the university's performing arts organization that is leading the organization of the concert.

The website gostanford.com/bts contains more information about parking, traffic flows and road closures. It also includes information for attendees about the venue's bag policy, tailgating and merchandise. Area residents

can email concertinfo@stanford.edu about sound concerns and other inquiries.

Second act

The BTS concert follows last year's Coldplay spring concerts, the first-ever artist to play in the Stanford football stadium. Nemani said Coldplay was well-received by students and community members. The energy at those concerts, she said, was special. The BTS concert is even bigger than Coldplay, Nemani said.

"This is double the size on the operation side," Nemani said. "There are almost 100 trucks versus 40 with Coldplay. So it's a bigger stage, a bigger show, and



Photo by BTS/Courtesy of HYBE

BTS will perform at Stanford University May 16, May 17 and May 19.

we're doing an additional night."

Stanford Live may continue to have large spring concerts in the Stanford Stadium, Nemani said, but artists must fulfill certain requirements. They must be available to perform during a window of time that doesn't conflict with football season or Commencement. They also

must be popular enough to fill a stadium that seats over 50,000 people. Finally, the artist must speak to multiple generations of people and to students, alumni and local residents.

"When (Live Nation) came to us with BTS, we kind of fell

See **BTS**, page 15

District Attorney: former Woodside town manager's 'aggressive negotiation' isn't criminal extortion

Jason Ledbetter released whistleblower report after council declined his severance payment demand

By Arden Margulis

Former Woodside Town Manager Jason Ledbetter won't face criminal prosecution for allegedly attempting to extort the town, the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office announced May 6.

Ledbetter asked town officials

on Feb. 17 to pay him \$400,000 — encompassing one-year's salary, medical benefits and accrued paid vacation days — and threatened to publicly release his 14-page whistleblower report alleging illegal and unethical behavior by members of the Woodside Town Council if the severance package wasn't

forthcoming. When the council declined, Ledbetter sent his allegations to reporters, town staff, commissioners and prosecutors.

District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said that Ledbetter fully cooperated with the investigation and was interviewed for several hours. Ledbetter declined to comment when reached by

this news organization.

The town's attorney Richard Bolanos said in a statement that the town "strongly disagrees" with the District Attorney's Office decision not to charge Ledbetter.

Ledbetter's report made a number of allegations, only one of which was substantiated by

the town's investigator. In it, Ledbetter alleged that Mayor Pro-Tempore Paul Goeld and Mayor Brian Dombkowski pressured him to delay housing projects in their districts and made racist and sexist comments. Ledbetter accused

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The Humans Behind

THE HEADLINES

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2026 SPRING
MEMBERSHIP DRIVE



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Aging with *Dignity* Living with *Connection*

Meet Marie.

At 72, she's a proud grandmother who treasures staying close to her family. This spring, as she celebrated her birthday through video calls, laughter, and messages from loved ones around the world, she reflected on how much her independence means to her. But living alone had started to feel harder—preparing balanced meals was tiring, arranging safe transportation felt stressful, and she worried about becoming isolated.

That's when Marie connected with PVI.

Today, one of her favorite parts of the week is visiting the Adult Activity Center at Little House, where she takes classes, shares laughter, and enjoys meaningful conversations with friends. Nutritious meals are delivered to her door, and with RIDE PVI, she can travel safely to appointments, run errands, and stay connected to her community.

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MODERNIZED EICHLER IN PRIME CENTRAL MENLO

Set along a peaceful, tree-lined street in prime Central Menlo, this beautifully renovated Eichler blends iconic mid-century design with high-end modern finishes, showcasing vaulted ceilings, walls of glass, and a seamless indoor-outdoor flow. The expansive great room is anchored by a striking floor-to-ceiling concrete fireplace and opens to a thoughtfully landscaped backyard with a patio and lawn beneath mature trees. Porcelanosa tile floors run throughout the home, complementing a chef's kitchen with Italian Scavolini cabinetry, Caesarstone countertops, and premium Miele and Bosch appliances, along with a spacious butler's pantry connecting to the finished garage. Four bedrooms include a serene primary suite with floor-to-ceiling windows and a spa-inspired bath with a jetted tub and shower. Energy-efficient upgrades such as radiant heating, a tankless water heater, and a foam roof complete this modernized Eichler in a highly sought-after location just minutes from downtown Menlo Park, Stanford University, and Sand Hill Road, with access to top-rated schools including Oak Knoll Elementary, Hillview Middle, and Menlo-Atherton High (buyer to verify eligibility).

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NONPROFIT LOCAL NEWS
FOR THE MIDPENINSULA AND TRI-VALLEY

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We're kicking off our spring membership drive and doubling down on our commitment to you, our community. Every day, real human reporters are out in the field covering local stories and delivering accurate, fact-checked journalism you can trust.

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Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

East Palo Alto nonprofit supplies teachers with a helping hand

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

Andrea Quezada's transitional kindergarten classroom at Los Robles Ronald McNair Academy is decorated with colorful posters, a play kitchen, dollhouse, hands-on tools and boxes of toys, and nearly all of it was funded by a grant from the East Palo Alto Kids Foundation (EPAK).

"When my students first came in, we only started with one box of Magna-Tiles, blocks and some Play-Doh," said Quezada.

This year marks her first year teaching in her own classroom in the Ravenswood City School District. When she first walked into her new room, it was completely bare, she said. The district was only able to provide desks, chairs and a few shelves for her 24 students. Luckily, she was familiar with EPAK's grants from her time as a teacher at All Five, a Menlo Park preschool and beneficiary of the nonprofit.

Volunteer-run EPAK was founded in 1993 and focuses on helping historically underserved schools and programs in East Palo Alto and the Belle Haven neighborhood in Menlo Park.

"We are always happy to bring little things like goodie bags, but when it comes to materials, that can be a bit more expensive," said Quezada.

She added that even though there are certain supplies she'd



Seeger Gray

Transitional kindergarten teacher Andrea Quezada plays with her students at Los Robles Ronald McNair Academy in East Palo Alto on April 30.

love to buy for her students, she often doubts whether she actually needs them for her classroom. When lack of funding is a concern, she said she holds off on buying supplies that could be beneficial for her students but are not crucial to their learning experience.

On average, educators are spending between \$500 to \$900 of their own money on classroom supplies during the school year, according to the National Education Association. Thanks to EPAK funding, Quezada was able to get \$1,875 -worth of materials for her TK classroom without digging into her own pockets.

EPAK offers regular grants of up to \$750 twice a year, special grants of up to \$5,000 for large-scale projects and a \$375 grant for new teachers. For the

2024-25 fiscal year, the East Palo Alto Kids Foundation awarded over \$378,000 to local teachers, according to its annual report. That includes 84 new teacher grants, 383 regular grants and 18 special grants.

EPAK is currently supporting 12 local schools including all Ravenswood district campuses, TIDE Academy in Menlo Park, East Palo Alto Charter School and Kipp Esperanza High School. The nonprofit's grants are also open to school counselors, athletic coaches, pathologists, librarians, special education teachers and wellness staff.

Last year, the nonprofit received \$387,785 worth of contributions from community

See **NONPROFIT**, page 15

Sequoia district faces discrimination lawsuit from ex-M-A staffer

Lawsuit shows connection to arrested special education student

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

The stack of lawsuits against the Sequoia Union High School District continues to pile up, with former Menlo-Atherton secretary Ofa Taimani alleging district administrators engaged in racial discrimination and retaliation.

Taimani filed a lawsuit with the San Mateo County Superior Courts on April 25, adding to at least 10 lawsuits accusing the district of wrongdoing. The suit names Superintendent Crystal Leach, M-A Principal Karl Losekoot, Associate Superintendent Bonnie Hansen, M-A Vice Principal Emily Rigotti and former Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Todd Beal.

A school district representative said they were unable to comment due to pending litigation.

Taimani is being represented by civil litigation and criminal defense attorney Harry Stern, who is also representing former M-A basketball coach Mike Molieri in his lawsuit against the district.

"Ofa has joined the growing number of people who have been forced to file suit against the district, due to the untenable atmosphere of harassment, discrimination and retaliation," said Stern in a statement to

this news organization. "We named the individual administrators responsible because that is the only way to ensure accountability."

Taimani, who had been working for Menlo-Atherton since 2015, was on medical leave starting in September 2024 due to work-related stress. In March 2025, after she had depleted her sick leave, she was fired by the district.

Taimani's lawsuit cites its connection to an April 2023 incident in which a special education student at Menlo-Atherton was forced to the ground and arrested by Atherton police officers. The student's lawsuit alleging the district released his confidential records and the Atherton Police Department of excessive force was settled for \$560,000 this March. The student was never charged with a crime.

The district has not identified who was responsible for giving away the student's records.

In her complaint, Taimani said she was called to a meeting with Beal in November 2023 about a complaint that was filed accusing her of providing confidential information about a special education student without the consent of their parents or a school administrator. The suit

See **SEQUOIA DISTRICT**, page 6

Menlo Park developer proposes five-story condo project on Hoover Street

By Arden Margulis

Apartments near downtown Menlo Park may be replaced by a five-story condominium building on Hoover Street, according to an application to redevelop the property.

Menlo Park-based Luxuriant Investments proposes to demolish three existing one- and two-story apartment buildings at 1300 and 1308 Hoover St. and replace them with a 34-unit, for-sale condominium project that is about 63 feet tall.

The proposal calls for a

five-story residential building with 44 ground-floor parking spaces and four levels of housing on the 0.68-acre site. The project would include four below-market-rate (BMR) units: three for very low-income households; and one for a moderate-income household, allowing the developer to request a 70% density bonus under state law.

According to the application, base zoning would typically allow 20 units on the site. However, California's density bonus law permits additional units in exchange for on-site affordable housing. All 34 units would be for sale, including the

four deed-restricted BMR units.

Each BMR unit would be a two-bedroom, two-bath condo averaging about 1,220 square feet. The remaining market-rate units would be a mix of two- and three-bedroom floor plans.

The developer is also requesting concessions waiving certain requirements, including green building certification, undergrounding of utilities and recycled water plumbing, to help offset the cost of providing the BMR units.

The proposed building would be the tallest building in the vicinity at about 63 feet to the roofline, excluding mechanical

equipment. The application states that adjacent multifamily buildings along Hoover Street are about 22 and 35 feet tall, while a 45-foot building sits at the rear along El Camino Real. If approved, construction is expected to take about 22 months.

Landscaping plans include new trees and drought-tolerant plants, though at least one heritage redwood and a large pine would be removed to accommodate a new driveway and utility equipment. The developer says other heritage trees on or near the site would be protected during construction and that new plantings would

increase the site's overall tree canopy over time.

The proposal is under review by Menlo Park's planning department, which will evaluate it under Senate Bill 330 streamlining provisions and local zoning rules. The project would require several approvals before construction, including architectural control, a major subdivision to create separate condominium parcels, a BMR housing agreement and permits for heritage tree removal. ■

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75-year-old bicyclist dies of injuries from Woodside car collision

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

A 75-year-old bicyclist who was seriously injured in a car collision in Woodside has died, the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office announced on Monday, May 11.

The Santa Clara County Medical Examiner-Coroner's

Office could not release his identity as they are still waiting to notify his next of kin. The Sheriff's Office said the cyclist died on May 10 at a hospital in Santa Clara County.

On May 1, deputies responded to a collision between a cyclist and vehicle near the 1400 block of Portola Road at around 12:15

p.m., triggering traffic delays for about three hours.

First responders transported the man, who was unconscious, to a nearby trauma center.

"The Sheriff's Office extends its sincere condolences with the family, friends and loved ones of the cyclist who tragically lost their life in this collision," said the Sheriff's

Office in a written statement.

The Sheriff's Office Major Accident Investigation Team conducted a thorough investigation of the incident, the press release said. The driver of the vehicle remained at the scene and cooperated with investigators. Initial findings do not indicate alcohol or drugs to be a contributing

factor to the collision, the Sheriff's Office said.

Anyone who witnessed the incident or has additional information is encouraged to contact the Sheriff's Office at 650-363-4911. ■

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Lawsuit alleges Meta knowingly profits from scam ads

Complaint alleges that Meta made \$7 billion from fraudulent ads in 2024

By Hannah Bensen

Santa Clara County filed a lawsuit against Meta on May 11 alleging that the Menlo Park-based company knowingly enables and profits from a large network of scam advertisements that defraud users on Facebook and Instagram. Meta, the owner of the social media websites, disputes the claims and plans to fight the lawsuit, a Meta spokesperson said.

The lawsuit, filed by Santa Clara County's legal counsel Tony LoPresti, claims that these scam advertisements bring in \$7 billion in revenue for Meta. The complaint alleges that Meta is aware of the scope of the problem, which county counsel says exposes users to 15 billion scam ads across its platforms each day and contributed to \$2.5 billion in fraudulent financial losses to users in 2024. Seniors are disproportionately impacted by fraudulent ads, according to a press release announcing the suit.

"Meta's platforms have become a preferred hunting ground for scammers, and our lawsuit alleges that Meta not only knows it, but has put in place systems

and tools to ensure it profits from it," said LoPresti in a Santa Clara County press release. "No corporation is above the law. As civil prosecutors in Silicon Valley, we cannot allow a tech company as powerful as Meta to continue perpetrating a worldwide scheme to deceive consumers."

A spokesperson for Meta said the company actively combats scam ads.

"This claim relies on Reuters reporting that distorts our motives and ignores the full range of actions we take to combat scams every day," said Tracy Clayton, a company spokesperson. "We aggressively fight scams on and off our platforms because they're not good for us or the people and businesses that rely on our services. We removed over 159 million scam ads last year alone, launched new tools to protect people, and partnered with law enforcement around the globe to disrupt these criminals. We will fight this lawsuit."

The complaint is filed in Santa Clara County Superior Court. Santa Clara County characterized the lawsuit as "landmark civil prosecution," and the county claims that the action is the first of its kind brought by a local

civil prosecutor in the nation.

The lawsuit asks the court to halt Meta's alleged unlawful conduct through injunctive relief, a court-ordered remedy that forces a party to stop a specific action. It also requests restitution for funds lost as a result of the fraudulent actions, and asks the court to impose civil penalties on Meta, including enhanced financial penalties for misconduct affecting older adults and other vulnerable populations.

In November, Reuters reported that Meta projected that roughly 10% of its revenue would come from scam advertisements and banned goods. The reporting was based on internal documents that Reuters reportedly viewed.

According to Santa Clara County's complaint, Meta's internal system flags ads that are likely scam ads but, instead of stopping them, charges the scammers a premium price to run the advertisements. The types of scams include fraudulent financial products, cryptocurrency schemes, treatments for incurable diseases, ineffective nutritional supplements and impersonations of celebrities asking for money.

The complaint further alleges

that Meta provides artificial intelligence tools that enable scammers to quickly generate fraudulent ads, and that it bolsters these schemes through a network of "trusted" business partners who help scammers appear legitimate. The lawsuit also claims the company has laid off staff dedicated to anti-scam efforts and declined to adopt universal advertiser verification measures used by other tech firms, including Google.

"(Meta) treats potential penalties from regulators as no more than a cost of doing business," the lawsuit states. "In 2024, when Meta 'anticipate(d) penalties of up to \$1 billion,' it concluded that those fines would be much smaller than Meta's revenue from scam ads."

In 2025, Meta reported revenue of nearly \$201 billion, a 22% increase from 2024, and \$196 billion of that revenue came from advertisements.

The lawsuit was filed by LoPresti on behalf of the People of the State of California with assistance from outside special counsel Bernstein Litowitz Berger & Grossmann LLP, Bishop Partnoy LLP, and Renne Public Law Group LLP. ■

Hannah Bensen is a recipient of the California Local News Fellowship who is a member of the Embarcadero Media Foundation Staff through 2027. She can be reached at hbensen@almanacnews.com.

The Almanac

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The Almanac (ISSN 1097-3095 and USPS 459370) is published every Friday by Embarcadero Media Foundation, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-6558. Periodicals Postage Paid at Menlo Park, CA and at additional mailing offices. Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation for San Mateo County.

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

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SEQUOIA DISTRICT

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counters that claim by saying Taimani was on maternity leave during the alleged incident.

Taimani was also accused of allowing a visitor into the assistant principal's office, where photos of the room were taken illegally.

These accusations gave Taimani a panic attack, triggering a decline in her mental health for the next three years, her complaint states. Her condition started to deteriorate, forcing her to take medical leave as she sought treatment.

The lawsuit alleges that "her medical condition was caused by the defendants' harassing, retaliatory and discriminatory conduct toward" her. It adds that a "qualified medical

evaluator opined that her medical condition is industrially related." Taimani filed a workers' compensation claim that is still pending.

According to court documents, when Taimani returned from medical leave in April 2024, she was assigned a new position and was not trained for its job duties. Soon after, she received an employee evaluation where Rigotti accused her of two complaints similar to the ones made by Beal.

The district's investigation into Taimani did not provide any copies of documentary evidence. It was confirmed in August 2024 that no written complaint was filed or produced, according to the lawsuit.

The investigation concluded that Taimani had improperly

asked Rigotti for confidential information but did not sustain the accusation that she shared the student's private information without consent.

A month later, Rigotti allegedly admitted to Taimani that the verbal complaint made against her was false and that the changes to her new role were retaliatory, according to the suit.

Taimani's complaint claims she continued to endure harassment from administrators and had to take medical leave again in September 2024. During this time, she filed a complaint of retaliation against Leach, Beal, Hansen and Losekoot, but alleges that the district failed to address her concerns.

Taimani told this news organization in September 2025 that she felt she was "blindsided"

when the district terminated her, suddenly leaving her without a job and benefits. She said she had no prior warnings that she was about to lose her job.

In the last two years, Taimani also filed a tort claim against the district and a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

"First and foremost, Ofa is an educator dedicated to lifting up her students," said Stern. "She certainly never envisioned having to go to court to vindicate her right to work in a safe environment. But here we are."

In the lawsuit, Taimani seeks monetary compensation for attorney fees and lost wages due to her inability to work. ■

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Incumbent county supervisor faces challenge from Coastside community activist

By Arden Margulis

Incumbent and longtime Menlo Park politician Ray Mueller will face a Coastside challenger for the District 3 seat on the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. Former Half Moon Bay Council member Joaquín Jimenez is running for the seat in hopes of better representing farmworkers.

District 3 spans a wide swath of San Mateo County, encompassing some of its wealthiest communities as well as its rural areas. The district includes Atherton, Menlo Park, Portola Valley, Woodside and San Carlos, as well as parts of Belmont and most of the Coastside, including Pacifica, Half Moon Bay and unincorporated communities.

Mueller, an attorney, was first elected to the county board in 2022 after serving a decade on the Menlo Park City Council. His first term at the county was eventful: Mueller was one of the leaders of the effort to remove former Sheriff Christina Corpus from office after allegations of misconduct surfaced.

Jimenez has a long history of community activism on the Coastside with a focus on farmworkers. He immigrated to Half Moon Bay from Mexico at age 13 and in 2020, he became the first Mexican immigrant elected to the Half Moon Bay City Council. He lost his reelection bid in 2024.

Voters will choose the District 3 supervisor in the June primary. Because there are only two candidates, the race will not appear on the November ballot.

The historic removal of San Mateo County's elected sheriff is an issue that separates the two candidates, with Mueller advocating strongly for removing Corpus while Jimenez counts himself among her supporters.

"It was a major, historic event that affected residents not only in West Menlo Park but also in how our jails are run," Mueller said.

After concerns about Corpus' leadership emerged in 2024, the Board of Supervisors hired a retired judge to investigate complaints of retaliation and conflict of interest against her and her chief of staff, Victor Aenlle. After voters approved Measure A, giving the county supervisors authority to remove a sheriff, they did so unanimously — a first in California history.

Since then, Mueller and newly appointed Sheriff Kenneth Binder, who is serving out the remainder of Corpus' term, have



Ray Mueller



Joaquín Jimenez



held several community meetings across District 3.

"I take pride in the fact that I helped lead the county through the stabilization of the sheriff's Department," Mueller said.

Jimenez is a staunch ally of the former sheriff and said he stood by Corpus "100%" before she was removed from office.

"Measure A was racist. It was sexist. Her leadership was questioned. Her personal life was questioned. She's still a strong leader, just the fact that she hasn't quit, that's why I'm behind her ... that's encouraging a lot of young women and a lot of young men to be sheriff, to be working in law enforcement," Jimenez has said.

If elected, Jimenez said his priorities would be economic mobility, public safety, affordable housing and environmental justice.

He wants the county to do more to support farm workers and grow the local agriculture industry. "It's a big opportunity for a lot of people who are new, small businesses," Jimenez said. "(It) will help the economy and increase food production and food security."

Jimenez said he wants to see more Sheriff's Office programs on the Coastside that help vulnerable people feel connected to and comfortable with county law enforcement.

"It's a new era of policing: more law enforcement engagement with our community is a big deal. We want to see our officers engaging with our community," Jimenez said. He added that local law enforcement needs to have a better presence at community events like the Half Moon Bay Pumpkin Festival.

While Jimenez wants to develop programs that can help low-income individuals with home ownership and affordable housing, he also thinks developments need to be "smart" and appropriate for their communities. He opposes the proposed Pacifica Quarry development and said housing should not be forced on cities without adequate infrastructure.

Mueller cited public safety as a focus in his first term, along with assisting cities in District 3. He worked with District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe and

Supervisor Jackie Speier to launch a unit focused on investigating human trafficking and protecting victims. He also co-sponsored the creation of the county's Office of Labor Standards Enforcement to address wage theft and unsafe working conditions.

Mueller pushed to close a newly opened West Menlo Park smoke shop after the county alleged it violated rules meant to protect children. Sheriff's deputies later said they found evidence of illegal drug sales. Mueller then successfully campaigned for the county to ban recreational nitrous oxide, or "whippets," and become the first Bay Area county to ban kratom, a botanical substance often marketed as a dietary supplement but which health officials warn can be addictive and harmful.

Following a recent increase in burglaries in West Menlo Park, Mueller said he worked with residents in both unincorporated areas and the city of Menlo Park to boost awareness and preparedness.

Challenges ahead

Whoever is elected to the Board of Supervisors in June will need to deal with serious challenges facing San Mateo County. The county may lose over \$70.8 million for state funding for the last fiscal year that county officials say it is owed as part of in-lieu taxes the state distributes to local jurisdictions. The county has said that if California does not fully fund the missing in-lieu taxes, it would have to close eight homeless shelters that serve 3,000 people, cancel the construction for 437 affordable housing units and eliminate financial assistance programs that serve veterans, families and seniors.

If forced to make budget cuts, Jimenez said he would prioritize programs that are financially sustainable and can support people across the county. One of his ideas is to help direct locally grown food to food banks and hospitals. But he also would want to take a look at current programs and ensure they are targeted at people with the most need. Jimenez said an example of the types of spending he does not

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



What Can I Build On My Lot?

Dear Monica: I'm confused by the current building rules regarding e.g., lot splits, SB-9, R-1 zoning, etc. What is the best way to find out what can be done on my lot?

Christine G.

Dear Christine: To start, you should consult the Planning Dept. in your jurisdiction. They will be able to tell you what is allowed by your city/county. In addition, the Senate Bill 9, which became the law in California in 2021, allows non-discretionary approval of residential housing units in an area zoned for residential use. There are some limitations.

There is much to know about the potential uses of residential lots and consultants who will provide this. With the value of your property at stake, it is advisable to consult an expert.

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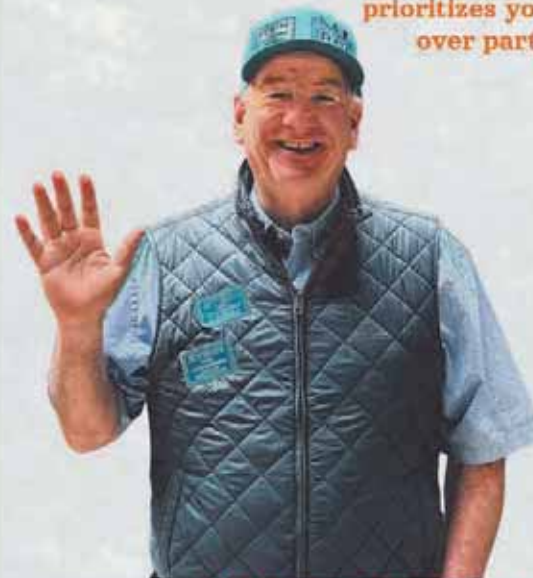
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See **SUPERVISOR**, page 10

Finance commissioner challenges Combs for Menlo Park City Council seat

By Arden Margulis

The Menlo Park City Council election is starting to take shape, even though it won't be on the ballot until November. A member of the city's Finance and Audit Commission is running against Councilmember Drew Combs to represent District 2 — which includes the Willows and Flood Park.

Vamsi Velagapudi, 47, is the first candidate to announce a

challenge to Combs, an attorney for Meta who has served on the council since 2018 and is seeking reelection to a third term.

Velagapudi, who has lived in Menlo Park for eight years, said he wants to make the city more family-focused and connected, while using his experience as a consultant to help the City Council operate more efficiently.

Combs, 49, said he decided to seek reelection because of the unique perspective he brings.

"I see running for reelection about continuing to be the voice that I have historically been, which is very much rooted in pragmatism and reason and balance, and has had enormous impact," Combs said.

While several factors led to his decision to run, Velagapudi said watching the City Council's annual priority-setting meeting on March 12 showed him how he could help.

"It was not a good meeting," Velagapudi said about the three-and-a-half-hour workshop. "So much of the time spent was discussing what a priority should be, without much alignment at the end of it."

The discussion included debate among councilmembers over what qualifies as a priority, a recurring theme of the annual meeting. While several residents asked to add public safety as a priority, some on the council argued that a "core function" cannot be considered a priority. The council ultimately added public safety as a priority after extensive discussion.

Combs said his challenge to the exception for core functions helped shift his colleagues' views.

"The fact that public safety is now on the priority list has a lot to do with my specific approach to the idea," he said.

Velagapudi said the debate

reflected a lack of alignment on the council, which affects the city's work.

"What I tend to see on the council at the moment is that there's lots of good discussion, but I don't always see consensus. When you don't have that kind of clear clarity at the top, it is no surprise to me that everything else we do is going to be squishy and people are going to be confused," Velagapudi said. "You can't spend a priority meeting mostly talking about what a priority is and not getting to a consensus."

Velagapudi worked as a strategy consultant for McKinsey & Company, one of the "big three" consulting firms, where he said he helped large companies and some public agencies decide on high-level strategy.

"I like to think that I could have helped in that meeting," he said.

Velagapudi retired last year and has since focused on public service. He joined the East Palo Alto Sanitary District Advisory Commission in February and the Citizens' Bond Oversight Committee for the Menlo Park City School District in March 2025. He also served on the Menlo Park Library Commission from June 2021 to December 2023. Since April 2025, he's served on the Finance and Audit Commission.

Velagapudi grew up in London, where he earned an MBA from Bayes Business School. He lived in Singapore before moving to the United States about 10 years ago.

Combs said he has long been a unique voice on the City Council and is not afraid to be the sole dissenting vote.

"I think that my approach on the council has real impact and value — there are literally dozens of examples. I look forward to continuing to be that voice."

During the past four years, Combs said he is proud of his work to pass an RV overnight parking ban following concerns from residents and businesses.

"I led the city's efforts to address in a compassionate and empathetic way the issue of long-term parking on city streets, specifically the concentration in the Bohannon Office Park area," Combs said. "It took a couple of tries but the issue has been largely solved while other cities continue to struggle."

He also cited improvements to Willow Oaks Park and his advocacy for Menlo Park's recreation programs.

If reelected, Combs said he wants to continue his practical approach to city issues. One of his goals over the next four years is to restart discussions on

See **MP COUNCIL**, page 10

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

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

AN ORDINANCE OF THE WOODSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF SAN MATEO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA ESTABLISHING A SCHEDULE OF FEES TO BE CHARGED BY THE FIRE DISTRICT

The proposed ordinance is also identified as Ordinance 26-01.

All interested persons are invited to attend the Public Hearing and be heard on this matter. The Public Hearing will take place on May 26, 2026 at 6:00 PM at 808 Portola Road, Portola Valley, CA 94028. This meeting will be conducted in a hybrid format, and the public may also attend this meeting virtually. Details on participating by Zoom or other virtual format will be available on the published May 26, 2026 agenda for the Board of Directors meeting.

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED ORDINANCE: The purpose of the ordinance is to establish fees, as defined in the California Constitution, that are no more than necessary to cover the reasonable costs of Fire District governmental activities, and that the manner in which those costs are allocated to a payor bear a fair or reasonable relationship to the payor's burdens on, or benefits received from, the Fire District's governmental activities. The fees established by the Ordinance are authorized pursuant to Health & Safety Code section 13916 and any other applicable provisions of California statutes and regulations.

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

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

The proposed Ordinance 26-01 is available for review online at <https://www.woodsidefire.org/our-district/fire-prevention-division/prevention-ordinances-and-resolutions> and will be available in the agenda packet for the May 26, 2026, meeting.

A certified copy of the proposed Ordinance 26-01 is also available upon request by contacting the District Office, at (650) 851-1594, 808 Portola Rd. #C, Portola Valley, CA 94028.

The data indicating the amount of cost, or estimated cost, required to provide the service or the cost of enforcing any regulation for which the fees are charged, and the revenue sources anticipated to provide the service or the cost of enforcing any regulation, including general fund revenues, is available for public inspection at the District Office, 808 Portola Rd. #C, Portola Valley, CA 94028.

Run Dates: May 8 and May 15

LEDBETTER

continued from page 1

Councilmember Jenn Wall of sexual discrimination and bullying resulting from her preference for a female town manager candidate. He also alleged Dombkowski sought to "bury" a proposal to reduce speed limits near Woodside Elementary School, which was subsequently approved by the Town Council.

Ledbetter was placed on paid administrative leave in mid-February while investigations by the town's third-party attorney and the District Attorney's Office were underway. Assistant Town Manager Melissa Cardinale has been acting town manager since Ledbetter was put on leave.

The Woodside Town Council fired Ledbetter on April 30 after Stallard Panebianco P.C., a workplace investigation firm retained by the town, found only one of Ledbetter's 11 accusations had evidence to support it. He was terminated with cause and without severance pay.

In a letter to the town's attorney, Deputy District Attorney Joseph Cannon wrote that the DA's Office did not find evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that Ledbetter

had specific intent to commit extortion, which is required for it to be considered a crime. Cannon also said Ledbetter may have a convincing argument to a jury that his actions were protected under whistleblower statutes and the First Amendment.

"The sequence of events — demanding a severance package in the context of an employment dispute involving allegations of workplace misconduct — more closely resembles aggressive negotiation than criminal extortion," Cannon wrote.

In his statement, the town's investigator Bolanos noted that the District Attorney's Office is responsible for determining whether there is evidence of a crime beyond a reasonable doubt. "The District Attorney's findings stand separate and apart from the town council's determination that Mr. Ledbetter's conduct presented cause for his dismissal under his employment agreement," he wrote.

In connection to the whistleblower report, the District Attorney's Office also investigated whether Mayor Pro Tem Goeld violated the state's open



Jason Ledbetter

meeting laws when he disclosed information from a closed session meeting to Ledbetter.

While the town's investigation concluded that Goeld likely did violate the Ralph M. Brown Act, the District

Attorney's Office found that it is not a criminal violation. The only remedies for disclosing confidential information is a court order preventing information from being released, disciplinary action and being referred to a Civil Grand Jury — which may lead to someone being prohibited from holding some elected offices.

The only criminal offense contained in the Brown Act is for wilfully intending to deprive the public of information to which it is entitled.

The District Attorney's Office reviewed only potential criminal offenses and not the rest of Ledbetter's allegations. The Woodside Town Council scheduled a closed session at its May 12 meeting to discuss two cases of "anticipated litigation." ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.

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MP COUNCIL

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making permitting for substandard lots more efficient. About half of the lots in Menlo Park do not meet typical city requirements. Even minor development on those substandard lots often must go before the planning commission. For decades, the city has considered ways to reduce that burden and allow more ministerial approvals from planning department staff.

"I've wanted to look to make that process more efficient and less burdensome for as long as I've been on council. I haven't quite gotten three votes to give staff direction to devote time to it. My hope is that a future council will support it," Combs said.

He also said he wants to continue work on several projects he launched, including capital improvements on Bay Road, landscaping along U.S. Highway

101 and upgrades to the intersection of Middlefield Road and Woodland Avenue.

Combs also championed "activating" parks in Menlo Park beyond Burgess Park and the Belle Haven Community Campus by adding new programming.

Velagapudi said that if elected, he would focus on making Menlo Park more family-focused. One way he hopes to do that is by ensuring residents can easily bike and walk throughout the city.

"I came here for my daughter to grow up here and we're so lucky. We get to walk to Cafe Zoe. We get to walk to Willow Oaks Park, walk to school. There's a South Indian food place just around the corner. My hairdresser is right here. Spiffy is just down the road," Velagapudi said. "I'm conscious that as my daughter grows up, she can walk as well. And then within a small radius around

that, there's some areas you can bike around but otherwise it's trickier."

On housing, Velagapudi said that with the Willow Village project apparently canceled, proposals to build housing on downtown parking lots — and ensuring Menlo Park meets state housing requirements — are even more important.

"There are real outcomes if we don't meet those mandates: there are potential state sanctions that do have some teeth, 80 Willow for example," Velagapudi said, referring to the towering builder's remedy project proposed for the old Sunset Magazine campus on Willow Road.

He also said there are ways to mitigate concerns about downtown development, including impacts to businesses during construction and long-term parking availability.

"There's still things to solve for and I don't take any of those things lightly. And it's not just to build housing; it's also to make sure that downtown is vibrant," he said.

Velagapudi said that, in the long term, adding more housing downtown could help support local businesses.

Combs has been supportive of the city considering other places to build affordable housing instead of the parking lots but was outvoted when he proposed the city explore other options.

"There are a lot of issues that we haven't analyzed regarding the concentration of affordable housing at one location," Combs has previously said. "We did something to check a box and make ourselves feel better.

The council was in a bind (due to state requirements) but there was still optionality."

He has also said that how the City Council at the time approached the parking lot developments has led to community frustration.

"I do think it's important we talk about, well, this is the democratic process. But to a degree, I think the fact that we have ended here also speaks to something being broken," Combs said about the citizen's initiative. "I hear you vice mayor when you say this engagement could have happened some time ago during this process. But I also pause with the thought that to some degree: was the council blinded by a sense of its own righteousness?"

As the City Council works on downtown vibrancy, Velagapudi said he wants to ensure all residents can access downtown.

"It's harder for us to get downtown, and even getting to Burgess is sometimes difficult. Getting across 101 to the Belle Haven campus is harder. We're very lucky to have this little area — it's great here in the Willows. But it's harder to get outside of it and it's harder for others to come here as well," he said.

Velagapudi said quick-build bike and pedestrian improvements could both help residents and support local businesses.

Through his service on the Finance and Audit Commission, Velagapudi said he has learned more about the city's budget and is concerned about a structural deficit.

"Generally, when it comes to revenue, my philosophy would be how can we raise revenue

in a way that doesn't impact struggling residents and doesn't impact small businesses?" Velagapudi said.

He also said the city should more closely examine the programs it subsidizes. While he supports funding programs such as child care and aquatics, he said the council needs to consider trade-offs.

"We may need to start prioritizing things. And by implication, it means I won't be able to do all the things that I want to do," Velagapudi said. "It's not just whether this gets a million, it's whether something else gets less. That's the real way to have that trade-off discussion."

Velagapudi said he would aim to represent a range of views from District 2 residents.

"We need to see more councilmembers representing other views in their own districts and not just their own," he said.

Learn more about Velagapudi on his Instagram page @vote-vamsi and learn more about Combs at drewcombs.com.

The District 2 seat is one of three that will be on the November 2026 ballot. Mayor Besty Nash, who represents District 3, which includes Allied Arts and Downtown Menlo Park, announced she is not seeking reelection. Two candidates have already filed to run for that seat: Charlotte Reed and Laura Melahn.

District 1 incumbent Cecilia Taylor, who represents Belle Haven, has not responded to repeated inquiries asking if she is seeking reelection. ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.

Modesto Remo Imbimbo

February 14, 1932 - March 20, 2026

Modesto Remo Imbimbo, known fondly as Rem, Pop, Nonno, & Uncle Remo, passed away at his home in Woodside, California. A true Valentine's child who filled every moment of his life with boundless love, laughter, & generosity.

The youngest of four children of Italian immigrants, he was predeceased by his siblings Dionigi (Nig), Carlo (Sam), & Catherine (Babe). His lifelong love story with Barbara Dacquist began almost at birth. They married on April 25, 1954, and spent 72 never-a-dull-moment years together raising their children: Anita (Joseph) Cuevas, Antonia (Patrick) Draeger, Victoria Imbimbo, Steven (Laura Anderson) Imbimbo, & Mark Imbimbo. Beloved Nonno to grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Growing up in San Francisco, Rem followed in his father's footsteps into the family concrete business. His skill and work ethic would carry him into the Army, where he served in the Engineers Battalion. Once back home, he returned to work with his father and brothers at Golden West Concrete in Daly City. Eventually, Rem, his brother Nig, and nephew John would continue in ownership and running the company, working throughout San Francisco and the Bay Area until 1994.

In 1965, Rem's family, along with partners, would build the Millbrae Square Shopping Center, eventually becoming the Millbrae Square Company. Rem would later become the managing General Partner, transforming a small strip mall into a thriving community hub. In 1982, he joined other business owners and started Liberty Bank in So. San Francisco, serving as their first chairman of the board.

In 1964, Rem and Barbara moved their family to Woodside, where they quickly became beloved members of the community. Their home became a place of warmth and celebration, hosting holiday get-togethers, cioppino feeds and the legendary Gang BBQs, where friends and family would gather each year.

Rem's heart was endlessly open. Beyond his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, there are 30+ who lovingly call him Nonno, a testament to the many he embraced as family. Rem built more than buildings; he built a life grounded in love, humor, integrity, and generosity. A foundation that will endure for generations.

A celebration of life is being planned for May.



PAID OBITUARY

SUPERVISOR

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support is a grant of \$20,000 in sales tax revenue to the Pacifica Historical Society's restoration of a 1900s rail car.

Mueller pitched the funding to the Board of Supervisors, which approved it on Oct. 21, 2025, because the rail car would be used to support student education and preserve a piece of county history, according to Coastside News.

Jimenez contends that the

Pacifica Historical Society should not have gotten taxpayer funding while others in the county were struggling.

"That group has a membership, they pay a membership fee. They could do their own fundraising for that. I don't see why it is the county's place to invest," Jimenez said. The funding came from Measure K revenue, a 0.005% sales tax that voters renewed in 2016 to pay for quality of life services.

If needed, Jimenez said he would support a temporary tax to help pay for services that could be canceled due to state funding cuts, but only after the county exhausts any potential budget saving measures.

Mueller was one of two supervisors who did not support the county studying an increase in sales tax, according to the San Mateo Daily Journal.

Mueller said that in addition to the county's budget challenges, as county supervisor, it's his job to try to support cities in his

district through their own budget issues. Mueller helped Portola Valley officials mull their options, including a potential sale and lease-back of its town center, as it faces an ongoing financial crisis.

Mueller has a long list of endorsements including federal and statewide leaders, notably Sen. Adam Schiff (D-Calif) and Gov. Gavin Newsom. He is also endorsed by every member of the city and town councils of Portola Valley, Woodside, Belmont, San Carlos and Pacifica. He is also endorsed by three of his colleagues on the Board of Supervisors, Speier, Noelia Corzo and Lisa Gauthier.

Jimenez said he did not seek endorsements.

Information about Mueller's campaign is at voteraymueller.com and about Jimenez's campaign at joaquinjimenezforsupervisor.com. Register to vote at smacre.gov/elections/voter-registration. ■

Email Staff Writer Arden Margulis at amargulis@almanacnews.com.

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The grounds are extraordinary, designed to feel like a private five-star resort. An oversized pool with an elevated spa sets the scene for leisurely afternoons, while a fireplace and broad terraces create inviting spaces for relaxation or entertaining. Lush landscaping and level lawns frame the home, offering both privacy and a sense of openness, all complemented by rare Western Hill views that few Atherton properties can match. Moments from Las Lomas schools, Stanford University, and the venture capital hubs along Sand Hill Road, this estate combines seclusion, convenience, and a lifestyle defined by elegance, comfort, and timeless sophistication.

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BTS

continued from page 1

off our chairs because they are very, very special as an artist,” Nemani said.

Traffic expected

About 53,000 fans are expected for each of the sold-out concerts.

Gates to the stadium open at 4:30 p.m. ahead of each concert. The concerts start at 7 p.m. and end promptly at 10 p.m. Heavier traffic is expected before and after the concert. Certain roads on Stanford’s campus will be closed all day or for certain time periods, including certain sections of Arboretum Road and Lasuen Street.

Caltrain transit

Attendees can take Caltrain to the Palo Alto station, a short walk from

the Stanford football stadium. Caltrain will operate an additional northbound post-event train between Trains 171 and 173 to accommodate increased ridership following the concert. The train is expected to depart Palo Alto Station at 11:27 p.m.

Even Caltrain is leaning into the K-pop euphoria. BTS fans can take a K-pop themed Caltrain ahead of the Tuesday concert.

“BTS fans will have permission to dance on Caltrain’s two K-pop-themed trains as they head to the show from both the north and south to Palo Alto Station,” a Caltrain press statement says. “On board, fans will find decorated train cars, fun giveaways and prizes, music and a festive atmosphere as they travel to the concert with the rest of the BTS ARMY.”

The themed trains will take place on one

northbound and one southbound train to the Palo Alto station. The Northbound Local 143 train departs San Jose Diridon Station at 3:23 p.m. and arrives at Palo Alto Station at 3:55 p.m. The Southbound Local 142 departs San Francisco Station at 3:25 p.m. arriving at Palo Alto Station at 4:14 p.m. for the 7 p.m. concert.

Sound and security

Expect short bursts of fireworks during the set with a grand finale of fireworks for a few minutes at the end.

A number of entities were involved in planning a safe and smooth event, Nemani said. This includes Stanford’s departments of Transportation and Department of Public Safety. Stanford also worked with the Palo Alto Fire Department and the Santa Clara County Fire Marshal’s Office and Department

of Planning and Development to obtain permits to build the set and ensure the fireworks are safe.

Economic impact

Last year’s Coldplay concerts generated an estimated \$2.5 million in state and local taxes, Nemani said. Patrons spent money on restaurants, hotels, retailers, merchandise and transportation. Nemani anticipates a similar economic impact this year. She added that BTS fans are known to travel far to see the group.

The concerts will also create a wave of temporary jobs, from security and stage construction to merchandise sales, food service, and post-show teardown.

“It’s like its own little city,” said Nemani. “There’s hundreds of people working on this concert, putting it together.” ■

NONPROFIT

continued from page 5

members, local foundations and corporate donors.

Mary Ruth Leen, an EPAK board member, said the foundation awards teachers who are looking to buy materials that will have a positive and long-lasting impact on students for years to come. The organization also funds field trips, books and subscriptions to educational sites for students.

Leen, who is a former Palo Alto nursery school teacher, said EPAK is trying to “equalize the differences” between

schools across low-income neighborhoods in Silicon Valley.

Ravenswood City School District is currently preparing for an influx of students as The Primary School, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative-backed tuition-free private school, plans to shut down this summer. With over 400 students in East Palo Alto and Belle Haven being displaced and expected to enroll in public schools, Ravenswood teachers will need additional materials as they welcome more children into their classrooms, Leen said.

Quezada, who benefited from a new teacher grant, said that there can be significant differences in what each

classroom has to offer its students, depending on whether it has a veteran or a newcomer as its teacher. Teachers who have been on campus longer will have built up a larger collection of learning materials and toys for their children, but new teachers have to stock up their classroom a few items at a time.

“My students are very excited all the time and just the little things make them very happy,” Quezada said about the newly purchased supplies. But she added that even without the extras, students can still thrive. “The learning is still going, even if we don’t have the money.”

As a board member, Leen said that she

is focusing on creating more awareness about EPAK and the resources it has to offer, especially during Ravenswood’s anticipated enrollment increase. She hopes to be able to help teachers apply for grants once a semester to go over an application process that could seem intimidating to some staff.

“We want teachers to use the money in whatever way they can and need for their kids,” said Leen.

For more information on EPAK visit epak.org. ■

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

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

County Superintendent candidate forum

The Portola Valley Parent Teacher Organization is hosting a non-partisan forum on May 18 from 6:30- 8 p.m. to meet the candidates for San Mateo County Superintendent of Schools: Héctor Camacho and Chelsea Bonini. The event will take place at the Portola Valley School District Annex, 4575 Alpine Road in Portola Valley and virtually on Google Meets.

The two will participate in a moderated interview followed by a Q&A session. The forum will cover key topics including shared services for small district; academic excellence and literacy and student safety and mental health.

Join the forum remotely through meet.google.com/dvj-cija-fjj.

MPCSD school board candidate info session

The Menlo Park City School District will be holding a Candidate Information Night for individuals who are interested in running for one of three open seats on the district’s board of education. The information night will take place on Tuesday, May 19 at 5:30 p.m. at TERC, 181 Encinal Ave. in Atherton.

Board members Francesa Segrè and Scott Saywell will give presentations on the roles and responsibilities of serving on the board, district initiatives and challenges and details on how to file for candidacy. Segrè and Saywell will also be available to answer any questions from the public.

The upcoming election is scheduled for Nov. 3 and the filing period to become a candidate is between July 13 and Aug. 7. Documents can be filed with the San Mateo County Registration and Elections Division, 40 Tower Road in San Mateo. The county will also be hosting a candidate seminar. For more information visit smcarce.org.

More information on the candidate info session can be found on district.mpcsd.org/board/school-board-openings.

Portola Valley horse fair

The Portola Valley Trails and Paths Committee is hosting its annual Horse Fair from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 16 at Town Center, 765 Portola Road in Portola Valley.

The family friendly event will feature pony rides, a petting zoo and carriage rides. Guests will also be able to practicing roping a dummy steer, listen to a horse’s heartbeat and meet the local horses.

Los Tolucas food truck will also be serving Mexican food for lunch. No dogs are allowed at the fair out of caution for the horses and other prey animals.

For more information visit portolavalley.net.

— Jennifer Yoshikoshi



OPEN HOUSE

SAT & SUN 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM



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Public Notices

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS – LCAP and Budget
The Woodside Elementary School District will hold two separate public hearings on the following items:

- The proposed Local Control Account-ability Plan (LCAP), including the Budget Overview for Parents cover page
- The proposed Budget for fiscal year 2026-27

Date and Time: May 26, 2026
Location: Woodside Elementary School Library, 3195 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA 94062
Website/Zoom link: <https://www.woodsideschool.us>
Copies of the LCAP and Budget will be available for public review at the District office 3195 Woodside Road, Woodside, CA 94062 from May 21 – May 26, 2026, between 9:00 am – 3:00 pm and will also be posted on the District website at <https://www.woodsideschool.us>. To request a printed or electronic copy, please contact Michelle Ahlstrom at mahlstrom@woodsideschool.us or phone 650 851-1571 ext. 4004. Members of the public and stakeholders may request to provide comment on the LCAP, the proposed budget, or any item therein by following the public comment instructions available on the District website.
5/15/26
CNS-4027048#
THE ALMANAC
(ALM May 15, 2026)

NOTICE OF INTENT TO ADOPT AN URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN AND WATER SHORTAGE CONTINGENCY PLAN AND HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING TO RECEIVE COMMENTS ON THE PROPOSED PLANS CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE – BEAR GULCH DISTRICT

California Water Code (CWC) sections 10610 through 10656, known as the “Urban Water Management Planning Act” (Act), require all urban water suppliers that provide water for municipal purposes either directly or indirectly to more than 3,000 customers or supply more than 3,000 acre-feet of water annually to prepare an Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP) at least once every five years. UWMPs support a water supplier’s long-term resource planning to confirm that adequate water supplies are available to meet existing and future water demands under defined conditions. The UWMP must describe and evaluate sources of supply, reasonable and practical efficient uses, reclamation, and demand management activities. The components of the plan may vary according to an individual community or area’s characteristics and its capabilities to efficiently use and conserve water. The UWMP must also address measures for residential, commercial, governmental, and industrial water demand management. Further, Section 10632 of the CWC requires that every urban water supplier shall prepare and adopt a Water Shortage Contingency Plan (WSCP) as part of its plan (UWMP). Section 10632.2 provides that, “An urban water supplier shall follow, where feasible and appropriate, the prescribed procedures and implement determined shortage response actions in its water shortage contingency plan...or reasonable alternative actions, provided that descriptions of the alternative actions are submitted with the annual water shortage assessment report pursuant to Section 10632.1.” The WSCP will be incorporated as an appendix of the UWMP. California Water Service’s (Cal Water) Bear Gulch District serves Portola Valley, Woodside, Atherton, and portions of Menlo Park and Redwood City, in San Mateo County. As a defined urban water supplier, Cal Water is preparing an update to its UWMP that will address the water service conditions in the Bear Gulch District. Cal Water intends to adopt and file that UWMP, and the incorporated WSCP, as required with the Department of Water Resources, the California State Library, and any applicable city or county within which Cal Water provides service no later than 30 days after adoption. **Schedule of upcoming actions:** On or about May 2, 2026, an electronic copy of the draft 2025 UWMP and WSCP will be available for review. After a public review period, a public meeting to receive comments on the draft UWMP and WSCP for the Bear Gulch District will be held online on June 1, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. The UWMP, WSCP,

and additional information on the public meeting, including a link to participate, are available at: www.calwater.com/conservation/uwmp2025
If you are unable to attend the scheduled public meeting but want to provide comments regarding the proposed UWMP or WSCP, you may send your comments through the inquiry form, located at the URL above. Cal Water will receive comments on the draft 2025 UWMP and WSCP through June 4, 2026. Please share this notice with others who may have interest in this matter.
5/8, 5/15/26
CNS-4037162#
THE ALMANAC
(ALM May 8 and 15, 2026)

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

On or around May 4, 2026, Cal Water will file Advice Letter 2579 requesting authority to increase revenues to recover recently completed and previously authorized infrastructure improvements. In the advice letter, Cal Water requests additional revenue of \$409,698, or 0.5% of currently authorized revenue. If approved, effective July 1, 2026, the water bill of a Bear Gulch residential customer with 9 CCF (which is 900 cubic feet, or approximately 6,732 gallons) of monthly water usage would increase by approximately \$0.54, or 0.5%. Although previously authorized by the CPUC in Decisions 26-04-045, 24-03-042 and 20-12-007 as part of the utility’s triennial rate review process, the project’s cost could only be recovered through a rate increase after it was completed.

A copy of Advice Lettes 2579 will be available on the internet at <https://www.calwater.com/rates-advice-letters/> (please select the Bear Gulch District from the drop-down menu), and may also be obtained from the company’s local office by calling (650) 561-9709. You may also contact the company’s headquarters by mailing the Rates Department at 1720 North First Street, San Jose, California 95112-4598, or by calling (408) 367-8200 and asking for the Rates Department. Cal Water offers many programs to help you manage your water bill including a Customer Assistance Program (CAP), (formerly, low-income ratepayer assistance program (LIRA)), water conserving appliance rebates, and other conservation programs. Please visit our website at www.calwater.com to take advantage of these opportunities.

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

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

A response or protest must be made in writing and received by the Commission’s Water Division by May 24, 2026, the end of the comment period. The response or protest should be sent to the CPUC (by email to water.division@cpuc.ca.gov, or by mail to the Tariff Unit, Water Division, 3 rd Floor, CPUC, 505 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94102) and to Cal Water (by email to cwsrates@calwater.com, or by mail to the Rates Department, California Water Service Company, 1720 N. 1 st Street, San Jose, CA 95112).
CALIFORNIA WATER SERVICE COMPANY
5/15/26
CNS-4040264#
THE ALMANAC
(ALM May 15, 2026)

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 27 , 2026 AT 7:00 P.M.
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that the Town Council of the Town of Portola Valley will hold a public hearing to consider : Adoption of Resolution Adopting the Master Fee Schedule Update
The meeting will take place at the Historic Schoolhouse, 765 Portola Rd, Portola Valley, CA; and may be accessed virtually. Comments may be submitted in writing prior to the Town Council meeting; email: PVTownClerk@portolavalley.net , or at the meeting of Wednesday, May 27 , 2026 at 7:00 p.m. All interested persons are invited to appear before the Town Council at the time and place herein above mentioned. The data indicating the cost (or estimated cost) of providing the service, along with the anticipated revenue sources is available for inspection at Town Hall at least 10 days before the hearing pursuant to Government Code section 66016(a). The Town’s website is www.portolavalley.net . The agenda and staff report will be published at <https://www.portolavalley.net/town-government/town-council/minutes-and-agendas> 72 hours in advance of the meeting.
Published: May 15 , 2026

Veronica Dao
Town Clerk
Portola Valley
5/15/26
CNS-4041661#
THE ALMANAC
(ALM May 15, 2026)

SOLIVANA WELLNESS
SOLIVANA WELLNESS LAB
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303750
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) SOLIVANA WELLNESS , 2.) SOLIVANA WELLNESS LAB , located at 1922 El Camino Real, Redwood City, CA 94063. Mailing Address: 1401 21 Street, Suite R Sacramento, CA 95811.
Registered owner(s):
INNER LIGHT WELLNESS LLC
1401 21 Street, Suite R Sacramento, CA 95811
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Limited Liability Company.
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 May 04, 2026.
(ALM May 15, 22, 29 and Jun 5, 2026)

SEA DESIGN & BUILD
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303658
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) SEA DESIGN & BUILD , located at 763 Polhemus Road, Suite 1, San Mateo, CA 94402.
Registered owner(s):
SEA CONSTRUCTION, INC
763 Polhemus Road, Suite 1 San Mateo, CA 94402
State of Incorporation/Organization: CA
This business is conducted by: a Corporation.
Registrant has begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above on 04/01/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on April 23, 2026.
(ALM May 8, 15, 22 and 29, 2026)

THE UPS STORE #8157
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303580
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) THE UPS STORE #8157 , located at 201 Grand Ave Suite 1, South San Francisco, CA, 94080. Mailing Address: 459 Farallon Ave Pacifica, CA 94044.
Registered owner(s):
MOHIT SEHGAL
459 Farallon Ave Pacifica, CA 94044
AKSHAY SEHGAL
459 Farallon Ave Pacifica, CA 94044
This business is conducted by: a General Partnership.
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 April 15, 2026.
(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

THE UPS STORE #6096
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303581
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) THE UPS STORE #6096 , located at 6748 Mission St, Daly City, CA, 94014. Mailing Address: 459 Farallon Avenue Pacifica, CA 94044
Registered owner(s):
MOHIT SEHGAL
459 Farallon Ave Pacifica, CA, 94044
AKSHAY SEHGAL
459 Farallon Ave Pacifica, CA, 94044
This business is conducted by: a General Partnership.
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 April 15, 2026.
(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

TRAYS4US LLC
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303608
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) TRAYS4US LLC , located at 711 Bayview way, Redwood City, CA, 94062.
Registered owner(s):
TRAYS4US LLC
711 Bayview Way Redwood City, CA, 94062
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 03/08/2026.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on April 17, 2026.
(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

BEHIND THE PAGE TUTORING
FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT
FILE NO.: M-303404
The following person (persons) is (are) doing business as:
1.) BEHIND THE PAGE TUTORING , located at 315A Central Avenue, Menlo Park, CA 94025.
Registered owner(s):
EMMA BERARDINI
315A Central Avenue Menlo Park, CA 94025
This business is conducted by: an Individual.
Registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name(s) listed above.
This statement was filed with the County Clerk-Recorder of San Mateo County on March 30, 2026.
(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO COUNTY
Case No.: 26CIV02974
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: Ana Daisy Ramirez Estrada filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
ANA DAISY RAMIREZ ESTRADA to ANA DAISY CALDERON
ANA DAISY RAMIREZ to ANA DAISY CALDERON
ANA DEISI RAMIREZ ESTRADA to ANA DAISY CALDERON
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: June 22,2026, 9:00am, Civil Branch of the Superior Court of California, County of San Mateo County 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: April 23, 2026
Stephanie Garratt
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM May 8, 15, 22 and 29, 2026)

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA FOR THE COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
Case No.: 26-CIV-02075
TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:
Petitioner: MARILYN ELISABETH HALES filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows:
MARILYN ELISABETH HALES to ELISABETH HALES HOLMES
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: MAY 27, 2026, 9:00 AM, SOUTHERN BRANCH of the Superior Court of California, County of SAN MATEO located at 400 County Center, Redwood City, CA 94063-1662. 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: 3/26/2026
STEPHANIE GARRETT
JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT
(ALM Apr 24, May 1, 8 and 15, 2026)

SUMMONS (CITACION JUDICIAL)
Case No. STK-CV-UPI-2025-0007326
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN JOAQUIN

Stockton Courthouse

180 East Weber Avenue

Stockton, CA 95201
Plaintiff: KENDRICK THOMPSON, an Individual

Defendants: FENG GAO, an individual; WEN TIAN, an Individual; DOES 1 to 20
NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: FENG GAO YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF: KENDRICK THOMPSON, an Individual.
You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after the first publication of this summons to file a written response with the court and serve a copy on plaintiff’s attorney. If you do not respond, the court may enter judgment against you.
Plaintiff’s attorney:

Ryan Naim, Esq.

Gould & Jefferson LLP

8484 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 605

Beverly Hills, CA 90211

(310) 899-9529

(ALM May 1, 8, 15 and 22, 2026)

SUMMONS (CITACION JUDICIAL)
Case No. STK-CV-UPI-2025-0007326
SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF SAN JOAQUIN

Stockton Courthouse

180 East Weber Avenue

Stockton, CA 95201
Plaintiff: KENDRICK THOMPSON, an Individual

Defendants: FENG GAO, an individual; WEN TIAN, an Individual; DOES 1 to 20
NOTICE TO DEFENDANT: WEN TIAN YOU ARE BEING SUED BY PLAINTIFF: KENDRICK THOMPSON, an Individual.
You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after the first publication of this summons to file a written response with the court and serve a copy on plaintiff’s attorney. If you do not respond, the court may enter judgment against you.
Plaintiff’s attorney:

Ryan Naim, Esq.

Gould & Jefferson LLP

8484 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 605

Beverly Hills, CA 90211

(310) 899-9529

(ALM May 1, 8, 15 and 22, 2026)

To place a legal notice visit
AlmanacNews.com/legal_notices/

What climate advice gets wrong

By Gabriel Sanders

GUEST OPINION

There are three key statistics everyone should know about reducing their carbon footprint.

1. 0.2 tons: the amount of carbon dioxide a household eliminates per year by recycling efficiently. Even when all your cardboard boxes and every aluminum can and bottle are properly sorted and processed, the carbon savings are only equivalent to avoiding about 750 miles of driving.

2. 2.4 tons: the amount of carbon dioxide a person can eliminate by going car-free for one year.

3. 4%: This is the percentage of Canadian high school science textbooks that list the top four most effective climate actions as giving up a car, skipping trans-Atlantic flights, following a plant-based diet and having fewer children.

Together, these numbers highlight something concerning about our society. This

misinformation has set our society up for failure.

In the early 2000s, British Petroleum hired a public relations firm to introduce the concept of the “personal carbon footprint.” BP had one objective: shift the moral weight of climate change from the fossil fuel industry to the individual. By 2007, three years after the seed was planted by BP, the term “climate footprint” became Oxford Dictionaries word of the year. BP got what it wanted, and from that point on, the carbon footprint calculator became a fixture of corporate sustainability websites. The message was clear: the problem is you, the solution is that you change.

Researchers Seth Wynes and Kimberly Nicholas quantify the deficit that this disinformation created. Going car-free saves 12 times more carbon per year than comprehensive recycling, and a single roundtrip trans-Atlantic flight costs more than

three years of perfect recycling. The actions at the top of the list, that impact the atmosphere the most, are almost entirely absent from the pamphlets, school curriculums and government guidance that most people encounter. But shouldn't one assume the Bay Area is doing better?

For residents of the Peninsula, this gap is easily closed. Reusable bags are ubiquitous, and recycling compliance is high. And yet this region also has some of the longest commutes in the country.

Now, research doesn't say to make hard decisions; it says to make structural decisions, one-time or infrequent choices that reconfigure the emissions profile of daily life without requiring ongoing effort. Replace a gas furnace with a heat pump when it fails. Choose an electric vehicle when a car needs replacing, or replace a commute with a carpool.

A household that installs a

heat pump does not have to remind itself to turn off the heat. A household that goes down to one car does not wake up each day and recommit to the choice; it's already ingrained in their life. The emissions reduction is locked in, and the cognitive burden that comes with it is essentially zero. This is what makes structural decisions so much more impactful.

Local governments, schools, and community organizations in the Bay Area have the power to change that. However, given that the current federal administration believes that climate change is “the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world,” this challenge becomes harder. Regardless of the federal government's position, California is in a unique position to act. A structural decision made in Menlo Park (switching a furnace or replacing a car) reduces emissions, whether or not the federal government believes it will.

Which brings us back to those three numbers: 0.2, 2.4, and 4. The blue bins at every street corner isn't the issue, and neither are the people throwing their Starbucks in them. The problem is that for 20 years, the most powerful and actionable information about climate change has been withheld by those in power.

California has decided not to make that decision, and neither should the people who live here.

If your furnace breaks down in Atherton, a lease ends in Menlo Park or a car breaks down in Woodside — that singular moment means more than all the tedious recycling you can do. The math has always been there. Now you have it. ■

Gabriel Sanders is a resident of Portola Valley and a student at Menlo School who is passionate about having a positive impact on the environment in the most efficient way possible.

What's on your mind?

From City Hall politics and the schools to transportation and other pressing issues, the Almanac aims to keep readers informed about their community. But we also want to hear from you.

Tell us what's on your mind by sending your letters to letters@AlmanacNews.com. Or snail-mail them to: The Almanac, 2345 Yale St., 1st floor, Palo Alto, CA 94306.

Letters should be no longer than 300 words.

You can also submit a longer piece of 450 to 600 words for consideration to publish as a guest opinion column.

Questions? Email editor@AlmanacNews.com, or call 650-223-6537.

Menlo Park Monthly Market Report

April 1, 2026 - April 30, 2026

Rossetti Realty Inc.

TOP 10 SALES*

1. \$11,750,000	2. \$7,156,000	3. \$6,750,000	4. \$6,678,000
2319 Warner Range Avenue	745 Windsor Drive	253 Princeton Road	1045 College Avenue
5. \$6,300,000	6. \$6,200,000	7. \$5,800,000	8. \$5,550,000
1940 Camino A Los Cerritos	735 Cotton Street	752 College Avenue	1190 Trinity Drive
9. \$5,533,078	10. \$5,300,000		
650 Menlo Oaks Drive	1030 Deanna Drive		

ACTIVE LISTING

Apr 55 ↑12%

Mar 49

PENDING LISTING

Apr 33 ↓20%

Mar 41

SOLD LISTING

Apr 42 ↑24%

Mar 34

AVERAGE SALES PRICE

Apr \$3,636,517 ↓6%

Mar \$3,878,882

AVERAGE SALES PRICE/SQ Ft

Apr \$1,626 ↑1%

Mar \$1,604

AVERAGE SOLD DAYS ON MARKET

Apr 16 ↑33%

Mar 12

MONTHS OF INVENTORY

Apr 1.30 ↓7%

Mar 1.40

If no further houses/correls were to come to market, the area would be SOLD OUT of residential real estate in the number of MONTHS shown

SALE/LIST PRICE

Apr 102.60% ↓5%

Mar 108.20%

30 YEAR MORTGAGE RATE

Apr 6.32% ↓3%

Mar 6.50%

Source: Bankrate

*April 2026 compared March 2026

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

Making A Move?

Sellers Start Here:  RossettiHomeValue.com

Buyers Start here:  RossettiPropertyFinders.com



Gail Antoinette Rossetti
Founder | CEO | Broker
License #01179344

3525 Alameda De Las Pulgas Suite C Menlo Park, CA Phone: 650-854-4100

Weekend Express

Your weekly email with tips and insights about hot events and cool activities

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Presented by *The Almanac*



SUMMER

Learn more at AlmanacNews.com/camp-connection/

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

CAMP CONNECTION

2026

ACADEMICS

Camp Integem

Bay Area

Kids and teens (ages 5-18) will explore AI, robotics, drones, coding, animation, holographic AR, 3D design, and more in a fun, hands-on journey of creativity. They will have a blast building smart robots, designing and flying space drones, and even launching their creations into near space—up to 100,000 feet! Create magical game worlds, design interactive 2D/3D animations, and bring your art to life. Earn NVIDIA AI certificates. No experience needed—beginner to advanced levels. Register now with code PAW26 to save.

Camp.Integem.com

(408) 459-0657

Code for Fun

Bay Area

Spark creativity this summer! Code For Fun offers computer science and robotics camps for ages 5-15 in Palo Alto, 35+ Bay Area locations and online. From coding robots to designing games, creating websites to digital art, kids explore, create, and learn through hands-on activities balanced with collaborative projects. Experienced staff ensure every camper at all levels has an unforgettable summer. Half day and full day options available weekly, June through August.

CodeForFun.com

(510) 578-8920

Destination Science

Bay Area

The fun science day camp for curious kids 5 to 11! Encourage the love of science, spark creativity, year-round hands-on learning with Destination Science camp. 2026 new camp themes: Robot Olympic Challenge, Movie Maker STEM Lab and Jedi Engineering Science Camp. 15 STEM activities each week including make and take projects. That is three exciting science stations per day, plus games, creative challenges, silly songs and all the friendship and fun of camp. Destination Science's energetic, professional educators make learning fun.

DestinationScience.org

(888) 909-2822

Emerson Montessori School

Palo Alto

An amazing summer writing program. Every year, Emerson Montessori School offers its three Write Now!® courses — camp-like sessions designed to improve students' writing and public presentation skills. Each one-week course features a different focus: Expository Writing (prose forms used in school assignments), Creative Writing (stories, plays, poems), and Presentation Skills ("Posters & PowerPoints" this year). Parents are welcome at the afternoon "Authors' Workshops" and "Speakers' Forums." EmersonMontessori.com/WriteNow

(650) 424-1267

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San Jose

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Permission to dance

K-pop superstars BTS bring a joyful ARMY to Stanford this week

By Heather Zimmerman

In recent years, Korean pop superstars BTS have hit some milestones that listeners of earlier iconic acts will recognize. Elvis took time off from music for military service and when he returned, fans flocked back. Likewise, The Beatles drew millions of fans to their shows and set chart-busting records. In 2022, BTS visited the White House to share an important social message; Elvis and members of the Fab Four also made their own stops there.

But only BTS can claim its own ARMY. The group's fans are truly legion. The band dubbed its fandom ARMY, which stands for Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth. Not unlike a military unit, it's a massive group of people, motivated, well-organized and loyal, but in this case, "armed" with light-sticks, handmade trinkets, stickers and other merchandise and plenty of BTS knowledge to share.

On hiatus since 2022 so that its seven members could complete required South Korean military service, BTS is now touring internationally behind its 10th studio album "Arirang." On May 16-17 and 19, BTS ARMY will amass at Stanford Stadium for three concerts by the K-pop group. The shows sold out after tickets were announced in January.

BTS is the first group since The Beatles to have three number one albums in a single year, but finding an audience came about differently than in The Beatles' heyday. Dafna Zur, associate professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Stanford University, credits YouTube in part for K-pop's exponential growth in popularity.

The online platform came along just in time to be a boon to a new model of entertainment companies that emerged in Korea in the mid-1990s and early 2000s

"Entertainment conglomerates like (SM Entertainment), YG and JYP follow this sort of Hollywood model of everything under one roof: the training, the production, just all of the aspects that go into producing these sorts of talents in house" Zur said.

As conglomerates were becoming more common, the rise of YouTube also made it easier to reach a global audience.

"This is sort of a perfect storm of entrepreneurial, brilliant business, but also the visionaries that saw the potential of really hard-working talent in Korea, and then this platform that made it possible for things to go viral, and also for fans to take ownership of their own fandom as well. I think that's sort of how we go from (K-pop) being a kind of niche thing that starts to spread in an organic way," she said.

Formed in 2013, BTS came from one of the smaller conglomerates, originally known as Big Hit Entertainment and now called HYBE.

"But BTS really, I think it's once in a lifetime. It does feel like really an outlier, in terms of a group that was from a lesser known company. It didn't have massive resources behind it. This scrappy group, they were underdogs, really, and (became famous) just by sort of the sheer force of their personalities, their chemistry and brilliant company strategy," Zur said.

"These groups that emerged that really were able to shine as individuals too, not just as a group," she said.



Courtesy HYBE

The cover art for "Arirang," the 10th studio album by K-pop superstars BTS.

That also made it easier for BTS the group to temporarily step out of the spotlight when needed. The group's members, Jung Kook, V, Jimin, Suga, RM, Jin and j-hope, took turns completing military service, ensuring fans could still catch solo projects by members even with the band on break.

"There was such a strong sense of loyalty already on the ground. The fans were patient and (BTS) is very, very good about presenting themselves to fans in a sincere way. Fans really feel that they're seen, they're heard, that they're appreciated. It comes from a really sincere place, I think," Zur said.

That fan loyalty and connection speaks to San Mateo resident Sabrina Le, who will be seeing the band live for the first

time at Stanford. She had heard BTS' music, but in 2021 a friend gave her an "intensive" four-hour introduction to their music one afternoon and she quickly became a fan.

"Their songs are just so soulful, and they have all such unique personalities, and each of them is really good at their specialty, like Suga and j-hope and RM are amazing rappers. V and Jimin are such good dancers. I personally love Jimin's voice the most, and I like j-hope's rapping the most," Le said.

Although she admits to a soft spot for V, "It's so hard to also pick which favorite you have, because they're all so likable. And just even in all the interviews that they do, they're all just so unironically funny, and their songs are really catchy. Even if you don't know

Korean, even if you are not really into K-pop, there's gonna be a song where you're like, 'Okay, this is a banger.'"

Songs on "Arirang" draw on hip-hop, with elements of R&B and soul, while previous outings have leaned more into pop and rock, but BTS' music spans a lot of styles and influences. The group, which sings in both English and Korean, has also collaborated with artists such as Halsey, The Chainsmokers, DJ and producer Steve Aoki and Coldplay, another marquee name that played two dates at Stanford Stadium last year.

At the show, Le is looking forward to hearing the surprise songs — tracks that aren't part of the official setlist — and is hoping

See **DANCE**, page 2 |

The Corner Laughers' sixth album strikes a buoyant balance

Bay Area band recently released "Concerns of Wasp and Willow," their first album since 2020

By Heather Zimmerman

When The Corner Laughers last released an album, the world looked very different — locked down, in fact, because the group's fifth album came out in June 2020. Thankfully, this time around, the Bay Area band can look forward to performing and touring sans Zoom to support their sixth full-length album, "Concerns of Wasp and Willow."

The album came out in late March on Big Stir Records, the group's second release on the label.

The Corner Laughers are an indie-pop and folk foursome that features Karla Kane, vocals, ukulele; Khoi Huynh, bass, vocals and other instruments; KC Bowman, guitar, vocals and

other instruments; and Charlie Crabtree, drums. (Kane is also Embarcadero Media's Assistant Lifestyles Editor).

Kane and Huynh, who are married, live in Redwood City. They will perform songs from the album as a duo on May 15 at Little Green a Plant Bar.

For all its challenges, the pandemic didn't dent the positive critical reception for the band's previous album, "Temescal Telegraph," which was praised in the independent and overseas press.

As the followup, "Concerns of Wasp and Willow" strikes a balancing act with 10 tracks that are grounded with a clear-eyed exploration of nature and ecological themes, and buoyed by uplifting, hopeful melodies that are also catchy. In the first single off the album released last fall,

"Dark Matter," crows and their corvid cousins become a metaphor for standing apart from the crowd.

The album recently hit the #1 stationwide spot at Stanford University's KZSU.

"Concerns of Wasp and Willow" includes some collaborations and cameos, including with Corner Laughers co-founder and former member Angela Rhoades (née Silletto), British musician Helen Luker and a contribution from Kane and Huynh's daughter, Octavia.

We spoke with the band ahead of a spring tour of Michigan. They will head out on a limited tour of England this summer and also play various Peninsula dates throughout the summer, including July 3 in Woodside.

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

The Almanac: What inspired the title "Concerns of Wasp and Willow?"

Kane: We had the album mostly done, but we hadn't decided on the right title. We tried some and nothing felt right.

We happened to have adopted a new cat, who we named Willow, at the end of last summer. And also we were thinking about going up to Marin County, where I grew up. It's where we got married, in a state park.

So we usually go for our anniversary that time of year, and I had been reading that there was a huge wasp infestation at the time. So Khoi asked if I had discussed with Octavia, our daughter, about



Courtesy Big Stir Records

A family cat and an insect swarm at a Bay Area park helped inspire the name of The Corner Laughers' latest album.

if we wanted to go up there for the weekend. And I said, 'Yes, she shares my concerns of wasp and willow.'

For some reason I phrased it just like that. As soon as I said it out loud in that kind of strangely formal way, I was like, 'That could be the album title.'

Bowman: It implies being engaged as well as feeling dread, which is a fine line.

Kane: Later, I realized a lot of the songs have sort of an

ambiguity between darkness and light, and good and bad.

"Wasp and Willow" represents that balance, too, because wasps are thought of as scary and painful sometimes and willows and willow bark can be pain-relieving, but both are important to the planet.

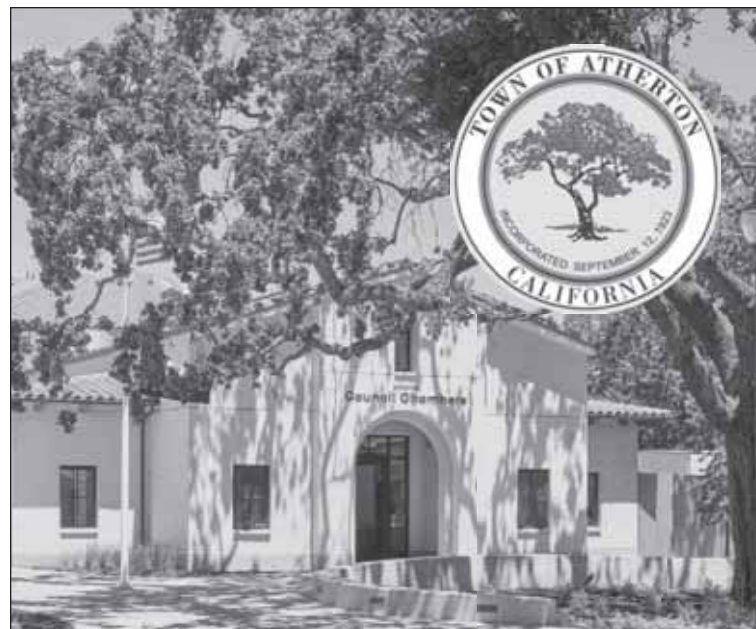
The Almanac: The environment and nature are strong themes in your songs. What draws you to those subjects?

Kane: No pun intended, but it's just natural. How does anyone not think about that? To me, it's such an important part of life. I do tend to start writing songs a lot of the time when I'm walking outside or hanging out in our backyard under the oak tree. So I think it's on my mind often, and obviously, you know, environmental issues are important to us consciously, but I also think unconsciously. It's always in my thoughts.

The Almanac: You name check some Bay Area locations in your songs. How would you say that the Bay Area influences your music?

Kane: I think our environment, both the natural world and sort of the cultural world of where we are always influences our songs.

Some of them are very direct and literal, like "Dusking." The first verse, it's set in San Francisco on a Saturday night. I just started singing that while we're walking through San Francisco on a Saturday night, going to the Caltrain station, like that one



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CORNER LAUGHERS

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very much unfolds, kind of in real time as it's happening. And I think a lot of the plants and animals and stuff that there's reference to our local species and things like that.

Bowman: And then also there's your travels to, in this case, England.

Kane: We always take a lot of inspiration from those trips just because they mean a lot to us. And they're always, you know, very memorable when we get to go tour over there.

The Almanac: Are there particular venues or events you return to on your English tours?

Kane: We're doing four shows, but the biggest one is the Ukulele Festival of Great Britain, which we also played at in 2024. It's just so cool. It's the most amazing venue. The nicest people go to ukulele festivals, I find. So we're really excited to go to that again. We're also playing in London and near Canterbury and Kendal, which is a town up in the northwest. The song "Rainbow Cardigan" has a lot about Kendal in it, because we fell in love with Kendal last time we were there.

The Almanac: The album includes a song co-written with British musician Helen Luker on

the song "Victoria Sponge." How did that song come about?

Huynh: We met (British musicians) Helen and Mark Luker at a music festival in Liverpool, many years ago, and they just happened to mention to us, 'Hey, if you want to come back to England, we'll loan you instruments and back you up.'

We kind of became an acoustic band for a while with Helen and her husband, Mark, who plays the bass. So they learned all of our stuff. We learned all their stuff. And one of the times we were over there, we stayed in this place in South London, Herne Hill, and that's where the song takes place. It's about the Crystal Palace, which was this Victorian glass building that was just enormous, and sadly, it burned down in the 1930s. It was kind of one of the wonders of the world, but now it's a cool park and it's all grown back to nature.

The Almanac: Your daughter, Octavia, also contributed to the album. She's got a writing credit on "Crumb Clean." How did that come about?

Kane: The song "Terra Mia," which is the first track, it's kind of an environmental story that is very dark and kind of apocalyptic and disastrous. So I wrote that kind of out of nowhere one day, and then the next day, I

was thinking, 'Wow, it's kind of funny, but it's also pretty dark.'

Usually I don't plan out what the songs are going to be. They just happen. But in that one in particular, I really felt like I want there to be — if this is going to be on an album — something to kind of counterbalance it that's way more hopeful about the environment, about people that are working to do good.

Octavia was playing on the piano at home, and she just played this little riff that was very catchy. So what you can hear at the beginning of this, she's playing it at the beginning of the song and at the end. It's a certain little riff. So then I snatched that and wrote the song based around that riff. The words are dedicated to her and her generation and (offers) a positive side to things. So I think of those two songs as going together in that way. ■

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

Karla Kane and Khoi Huynh
perform May 15 at Little Green a
Plant Bar, 1101 Main St., Redwood
City; admission is free. For more
information, visit cornerlaughers.
bandcamp.com or bigstirrecords.
com/the-corner-laughers.

DANCE

continued from page 19

they'll play one of her favorites, "Pied Piper" from their 2017 album "Love Yourself: Her." In addition to songs from "Arirang," the band will likely play hits such as "Butter," "Dynamite" and possibly "Permission to Dance."

As a fandom, ARMY offers plenty of opportunities to engage and learn more about the music and the band, she said.

"If you aren't familiar with BTS or aren't familiar with an album, there are so many pages and so many places where you can just (find out) 'where did this song originate?' You'll get a three-paragraph essay on where the song came from and what motivated them to make it."

She plans to buy a Bluetooth-enabled light-stick — official band merchandise that gives audiences an immersive experience, displaying lights and messages that

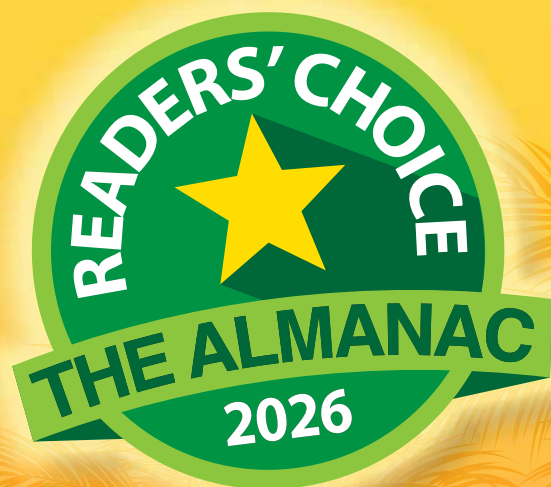
coordinate with songs. But fans also create a lot of their own merchandise, as well.

"Fans spend a lot of their own time and money creating stuff for each other. And they share. They give each other gifts. They decorate and personalize all the merchandise. So there are ways that people can participate, individually," Zur said.

She predicted that crowds heading to the shows will be sporting lots of purple — a BTS signature color — and bringing with them "a tremendous amount of joy." ■

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BTS performs May 16-17 and 19 at
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PLAYING WITH PANDAN



This Southeast Asian leaf is leading the next flavor trend in Silicon Valley

By Adrienne Mitchel

A fragrant green leaf is taking over coffee, cocktail and dessert menus along the Peninsula.

Pandan — a sweet, grassy and floral ingredient often called the “vanilla of Southeast Asia” — is the latest flavor to go mainstream in Silicon Valley, following the footsteps of other standouts such as ube and black sesame.

A staple of Southeast Asian cuisine, the flavor has been appearing more frequently in other settings, including in contemporary bars and craft coffee shops.

“The way I describe (pandan) is a combination of vanilla and coconut flavor, and it has grassy tones,” said Lisa Maria, owner of Indonesian coffee shop Hijau. “It’s very subtle, but once you are familiar, it’s very distinctive.”

Maria grew up in Indonesia with bushes of pandan leaves in her backyard. She recalls cutting the leaves and using them in desserts, snacks and even as room freshener.

After nearly 20 years working in corporate in the U.S., Maria got laid off and decided to start her own business. Taking inspiration from her parents, who were coffee roasters, she decided to open Hijau, an Indonesian coffee pop-up at De Anza College Farmers Market in Cupertino. A San Jose brick-and-mortar location is expected to open this summer.

“I think of coffee as my own canvas to introduce Indonesian flavors to the Bay Area,” she said.

Hijau’s menu prominently features pandan,

including a pandan latte and a klepon latte (which features the flavors of the Southeast Asian confection: coconut, palm sugar and pandan); soda gembira (a creamy coconut-pandan soda); pandan soda; and pandan steamer (pandan-flavored frothed milk).

“When I started, (pandan) wasn’t that prominent, and I noticed the frequency I had to explain what pandan is more often than maybe the past six months to a year,” Maria said.

While Indonesian cuisine is relatively limited along the Peninsula, she hopes to bring more awareness of Indonesian culture and flavors through Hijau.

“It’s very joyful for me to talk about the ingredient that I grew up with,” she said. “I’m happy to see more curiosity around the ingredient, and hopefully indirectly it will bring awareness to Southeast Asian cuisine.”

Pandan coffee drinks can also be found at spots such as Big Mug Coffee Roaster in Santa Clara, Phin Cafe in Campbell and Pour Decisions Craft and Robu Coffee in Mountain View.

Pandan has also made its way into a variety of Peninsula cocktail menus. In Brisbane, 7 Mile House offers a banana pandan martini; in San Mateo, Avenida Restaurant has a pandan old fashioned and a pandan Collins (called “Summer Back Home”); BarZola in Palo Alto serves a gin-based cocktail flavored with strawberry, lychee and pandan (called “Moon Safari”); and in San Mateo, Fogbird has a milk punch with toasted rice- and Earl Grey-infused rum and pandan liqueur.

Left: Pandan flan with pandan caramel, coconut rice crunch, yogurt cremeux and strawberries at Valley Goat in Sunnyvale. Photo by Vic Luo. Above: A pandan latte made with housemade pandan syrup at Hijau, an Indonesian coffee shop at De Anza College Farmers Market in Cupertino. Courtesy Hijau.



At recently opened Causwells, an American restaurant in Menlo Park, the cocktail menu features a pandan ube milk punch. Co-owner and beverage director Elmer Mejicanos said the inspiration came from one of his former restaurants. He had previously developed a Southeast Asian-inspired cocktail program for Lilah in San Francisco and loved the body that pandan gives cocktails, saying it tastes “almost like vanilla cake.”

“I think that Southeast Asian flavors as a whole are just interesting, and I think people are starting to experiment with those flavors,” Mejicanos said. “A lot more people are doing it.”

Mejicanos said that juicing pandan leaves results in a grassier, effervescent flavor, while boiling them yields a more savory, cakey flavor. In the case of his milk punch, which features rum, rice, citrus and salted ube macadamia foam, he found that the latter flavor pairs better.

Mejicanos thinks one reason pandan is prominent in the bar scene is because it’s easier for bars to play around with different ingredients than a cuisine-specific restaurant.

At Horsefeather in Palo Alto, bar manager CK Toribio took inspiration from his Filipino heritage to create the Bahay Buko, a buko pandan-inspired cocktail with whiskey, green chartreuse, coconut, pandan and citrus. There’s also a zero-proof cocktail called the Coco-Cabana, featuring nonalcoholic gin, pandan, coconut water, lemon and toasted coconut salt.

Toribio said that in the past, he’s incorporated pandan into cocktails in the form of a tincture, where he infuses the leaf into very high-proof alcohol. But for Horsefeather’s current pandan drinks, he uses a sous vide to infuse the pandan into coconut water, blending in some pandan for color.

He thinks that pandan’s rise in popularity is likely due to people being more open to trying new flavors and learning about other cultures, the aesthetic nature of pandan’s bright green color and its vanilla-like flavor, which many people are familiar with and already enjoy.

Pandan is also appearing in desserts. At Valley Goat in Sunnyvale, find pandan flan with pandan caramel and yogurt cremeux. Inspired by pastry chef Sasha Tran’s Vietnamese heritage, the dessert is reminiscent of a childhood snack of yogurt and condensed milk.

“I just wanted to do a fun, nostalgic dessert for the springtime,” she said.

To make the pandan flan, Tran blends fresh pandan with water and strains it to make pandan juice. Then she combines the juice with eggs, cream, sugar and pandan essence to create the custard. While pandan is typically used in sweet applications, she’s seen it used in a few savory dishes, including pandan-infused sticky rice paired with fried chicken.

Tran said she’s not surprised that pandan is becoming more prevalent on local menus, noting that there’s a large Asian population in the Bay Area.

“I see a lot of ube and pandan. It’s just a really fun, tropical-ish flavor, and it also caters to the demographic,” she said. ■

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

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Above from left: Bahay Buko cocktail with whiskey, green chartreuse, coconut, pandan and citrus at Horsefeather. Courtesy Horsefeather. Pandan cream latte at Pour Decisions Craft in Mountain View. Courtesy Pour Decisions Craft. Below: Black pandan old fashioned with rum, housemade pandan-toasted black sesame syrup and bitters at Avenida Restaurant in San Mateo. Photo by Zack Fernandes.



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573 PATROL RD | OFFERED AT \$3,750,000

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1100 OLD LA HONDA RD | OFFERED AT \$3,195,000

Woodside



950 ESPINOSA RD | OFFERED AT \$4,295,000

Woodside



490 LAS PULGAS DR | OFFERED AT \$12,998,000

Woodside



16351 SKYLINE BLVD | OFFERED AT \$14,995,000

Woodside



OFFERED AT \$16,500,000

Woodside



129 HILLSIDE DR | OFFERED AT \$3,595,000

Portola Valley



MODERN ARCHITECTURAL MASTERPIECE

COMPASS

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