

City to Turn the Heart of Embarcadero Into a One-Way Street

Story & Photos By Neil Farrell



The City of Morro Bay will turn the Embarcadero, from Harbor to Marina Streets, into a one-way street going north, eliminating nearly 100 on-street parking spaces. The changes will turn the heart of the Embarcadero, normally filled with cars, into the ghost-town look that it took on with the coronavirus shutdown of the economy in mid-March.

The coronavirus pandemic has yet to kill anyone in Morro Bay, but the fight against the virus is about to kill nearly 100 parking spaces in the heart of the Embarcadero.

The City Council at its June 23 meeting voted to at least temporarily eliminate on-street parking on the Embarcadero from Harbor to Marina Streets, and close the southbound lane of traffic, effectively turning the heart of the Embarcadero into a 1-way, 1-lane street heading north towards Morro Rock.

The parking lot at 714 Embarcadero and along Front

Street below the Blue Sail Inn would remain open, however, several spaces along Front Street will be changed to handicap spaces.

The vote was 4-1 with Councilman Jeff Heller, dissenting. Heller said he preferred the street be closed entirely to traffic.

Justification for the change was concerns that tourists are not observing social distancing in the fight against COVID-19. And with the waterfront being packed with visitors the past several weeks, few of which have been

One-Way Continued on page 14

Harbor Budget — Bailing Water On A Sinking Ship

By Neil Farrell

Morro Bay's Harbor Department is bailing water fast trying to keep its financial boat afloat, after the coronavirus pandemic response cut a huge hole in its revenue hull.

And while the proposed Fiscal-Year 2020-21 budget shows a small surplus, it's because deep cuts have been made, like taking a chainsaw to the department's expenses and future needs.

Harbor Manager Eric Endersby was uncharacteristically solemn when asked about his department's finances, 90% of which derive from lease payments by businesses along Embarcadero and City owned slips and moorings.

They anticipate this year a double-digit drop in lease payments, Endersby explained, about \$150,000, with next year more like \$250,000.

Also, there is some \$140,000 in deferred lease payments covering from April through June (the end of the fiscal year), he said.

The City Council voted to allow leaseholders to defer lease payments to August because the City, following orders from the Governor's Office and County Health Department, issued shelter-at-home orders and closed all "non-essential" businesses, which included restaurants and retail shops — the majority of businesses on the Embarcadero; the very businesses paying the Harbor Department's freight.

Endersby said he's been meeting with leaseholders and a special committee formed to help with harbor issues about this and at this point, he doesn't know how or when those payments would be caught up. They might just be forgiven, too.

As for the next budget, which totals some \$1.9 million, they formulated it assuming a 50% drop in revenues, due mostly to an anticipated drop in tourism. But, if the crowds flocking to the waterfront the past several weekends is any indication, the drop might not be so steep.

Endersby said he was astonished to see how busy the Embarcadero has been, likening it to a 4th of July Holiday crowd, in town for a fireworks show.

He explained that he cut 20%-25% out of his discre-

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Major Landslide At City's WRF Site

By Neil Farrell



Photo provided by the City of Morro Bay show a landslide that happened May 5 during grading of the land for the City's new sewer treatment plant. The 15,000 cubic yards of earth that slid was originally estimated at twice that size.

A landslide at the site of Morro Bay's new sewer treatment plant has opponents crying avalanche and City officials calmly dealing with the over \$130 million project's latest hiccup.

According to the most recent quarterly project report, "On May 5, 2020, a crack or separation on the southern tip of the slope being excavated was observed.

"The event has been classified as a soil slip or landslide with a volume of approximately 30,000 cubic yards (C.Y.). The soil slip was evaluated by several geotechnical firms and the issue has resulted in a change to the grading plans for the upper area of the site."

That initial estimate has now been cut

in half to 15,000 cubic yards, according to the City Manager. A large commercial garbage dumpster holds 3 cubic yards, so at 15,000 C.Y., the slide was about 5,000 dumpsters worth.

Work on the now over \$70M treatment plant began March 20 on hilly rangeland above the end of South Bay Boulevard at Hwy 1. Contractors Filanc/Black & Veatch have been digging away with dozers and excavators at a hillside that must be graded flat to create a site for the plant's buildings and equipment, and compacted for earthquake safety.

The contractor has since dealt with the slide. "Soon after the evaluations were completed, the contractor began excavating the

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New Soda Shop a Yummy Stroll Down Memory Lane

Photo and Story by Neil Farrell



Marisa and Ryan Bello recently opened the Bumble B Soda Co., located at 859 Main St., in Downtown Morro Bay.

People can exercise their sweet tooth at a new, old-fashioned soda fountain in Downtown Morro Bay, indulging in a delicious stroll down memory lane.

The Bumble B Soda Co., located at 859 Main St., next door to Top Dog Coffee Co., is the new venture for shop owners, Ryan and Marisa Bello, a married couple

and SLO County natives.

"Ryan and I have known each other since junior high, and high school," says Marisa sitting in their new shop, which is a bit of a work in progress. She grew up in Avila and he in Morro Bay, and both graduated from San Luis Obispo High.

Why open an ice cream shop? Marisa

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Planning Commission to Review City Housing Plan

By Neil Farrell

Work on the City of Morro Bay’s Housing Element is coming to a head with the Planning Commission slated to take up the document at its next meeting.

One of seven required elements in the City’s general plan, the Housing Element update this time is taking a different track. The City has joined its counterparts across San Luis Obispo County in an agreement that will take a regional approach to addressing the housing shortage.

Called the San Luis Obispo Countywide Regional Compact (on housing), the 1-page agreement is intended to address housing needs in an area that has been called the eighth, least-affordable place to live in the entire U.S.

“According to the National Association of Home Builders,” reads a staff report, “only 20.9 percent of the area’s share of homes are affordable to a family earning the area’s median income.”

According to the County’s Housing Element of the General Plan [2014-2019], “the chronic undersupply of housing affordable and suitable for locally employed people has economic, social and environmental impacts.”

The lack of affordable housing is a “significant challenge,” the report said, “and requires the efforts of public agencies, private industries, residents and working individuals to overcome it.”

In 2018, the State passed a law calling on local agencies to plan for more housing growth and though it took a year-and-a-half, SLO County is now fully onboard.

According to the report from the April 14 Morro Bay City Council meeting, “Pursuant to State law, the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) determines the region’s future housing needs by affordability level and directs the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) to assign the required housing units to each of the seven Cities and the County’s unincorporated areas.”

Called the “Regional Housing Needs Allocation [RHNA] Process,” SLO County needed to plan for 10,810 new housing units by 2028. The Council of Governments divvied up the total by city and county.

Total housing units for Morro Bay’s RHNA share is 391 — 97 for “very low income;” 60 for “lower income;” 70 for “moderate income;” and 164 for “above average income” people, as defined by the State Health and Safety Codes.

The H&S Codes define very low as 50% or less of the median income; lower income is 80% of median; moderate income is 120% or less of median; and above moderate income is anyone over the moderate level.

Other cities’ allocations are: Arroyo Grande — 692; Atascadero — 843; Grover Beach — 369; Paso Robles — 1,446; Pismo Beach — 459; San Luis Obispo — 3,354; and SLO County (unincorporated towns) — 3,256.

The Regional Compact has six stated goals:

- Strengthen community quality of life;
- Share regional prosperity;
- Create balanced communities;
- Value agriculture and natural resources;
- Support equitable opportunities; and,
- Foster accelerated housing production.

The Compact isn’t written in stone but is an “inspirational document.”

Work on Morro Bay’s Housing Element Update reached a milestone April 4 when the Community Development Department released a draft document for public review.

It includes a forecast (by SLOCOG) of the future population in Morro Bay, predicting the town would grow by 20%, going from 10,234 in 2010 to 12,261 in 2050.

In another chart, Morro Bay had a total of 4,846 households in 2010 and just 4,846 in 2017, an anemic growth

rate of less than 1%.

Another chart says of those 4,846 households, 2,774 were owner-occupied (57%) and 2,072 rentals (43%). However, “It should be noted that some of the owner-occupied households are occupied seasonally or are used as vacation rentals. Vacant Units are not included in the totals,” reads the Housing Element.

In 2010, the city had a total of 6,320 housing units, including single-family homes, mobile homes, and apartments and grew to 6,466 by 2018, according to State Department of Finance statistics. That’s a 2.3% total growth over nearly a decade.

Vacation rentals and homes used only occasionally or seasonally take up the vast majority of what’s considered rental housing. According to the Housing Element, “of the 1,360 total vacant units recorded in Morro Bay in 2017, 29 were for rent, 34 were for sale, and 1,194 [88%] were for seasonal, recreational, or occasional uses.”

If readers are wondering where all these nearly 400 new homes are supposed to be built, the City has designated densities and income types for all vacant properties.

Of interest are large, vacant parcels outside the City Limits and former industrial sites. At the Tri-W ranchlands surrounding the site of the new sewer treatment plant, the Housing Element is calling for low density and just 65 housing units over 45.52 acres.

A parcel on Little Morro Creek Road and north of Radcliff Avenue is slated for 75 units of low density. Also, a 9.96-acre parcel on North Main Street — site of a former Texaco fuel depot now owned by Chevron but is for sale — is slated for high density and 215 potential units. It’s also listed for extremely low, very low or low incomes.

And another large parcel of 10.06 acres located at 3300 Panorama Dr., — site of an old Navy fuel depot — is listed for medium density and some 45 units for moderate-income people.

And happening now, is a proposal to build 35 affordable apartments in a mix of one, two and three bedroom units at the corner of Atascadero Road and Sunset Avenue by the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo.

Some opposition to the project by neighbors concerned with issues like density, traffic and parking was delivered at the planning commission’s review. The Council is supposed to take up the project sometime in the next few meetings.

The Planning Commission will be review the draft Housing Element at its Tuesday, July 7 meeting (6 p.m. at the Vet’s Hall). The meeting will be virtual and interested readers can participate via Zoom or using the call-in number. City Planner Nancy Hubbard said the web link and the call in number for the meeting will be posted along with the official agenda, probably today (July 2) in advance of the July 7 meeting. See: www.morro-bay.ca.us.

Escaped Inmate Ditched Stolen Car in Los Osos, Caught in Nipomo

State law enforcement agents caught a wanted fugitive who escaped from Soledad prison, abandoned a stolen outside Los Osos and was ultimately tracked down and captured in Nipomo.

According to Sheriff’s spokesman, Trevor McKim, at about 8:30 a.m. Thursday, June 25, patrol deputies came across an abandoned vehicle in the 2000 block of Turri Rd., in rural Los Osos.

“An investigation by the deputy revealed the vehicle was stolen,” McKim said in a news release, “and was associated with Edgar Delgado, a prison inmate who had escaped from the Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad on June 23. The vehicle was found to be unoccupied and deputies conducted a search of the area for Delgado but were unable to locate him at the time.”

Officers with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Fugitive Apprehension Team, and SLO County deputies “began a joint investigation to locate

Delgado, who was believed to still be in San Luis Obispo County,” McKim said.

Their search for the fugitive ended Friday. On June 26, at approximately 1:57 p.m., McKim said CDCR’s Fugitive Apprehension Team, and deputies with the Sheriff’s Gang Task Force were conducting a surveillance operation in a restaurant parking lot in the 500 Block of Tefft Street in Nipomo when they observed a subject matching Delgado’s description.

“Investigators contacted the subject and he was identified as Edgar Delgado, the escaped prison inmate. Delgado was taken into custody without incident by CDCR officers and returned to state prison.”

McKim said when they investigated the stolen vehicle they discovered that several tools were also stolen out of the vehicle. Investigators from CDCR and SLO County Gang Task Force were able to recover those stolen tools at a residence in Los Osos for return to their owner, McKim said.

Sheriff Seeks Truck in Paso Rampage Case

By Neil Farrell



Sheriff’s detectives are asking for assistance in locating the driver of a white, Dodge Ram truck that was seen leaving the area of a police shooting.

The County Sheriff’s Department is looking for the driver of a pick-up truck in connection with the June 10-11 murder and shooting rampage in Paso Robles, where four police officers were wounded and the suspect killed in a shootout.

“Sheriff’s detectives are asking for assistance in locating the driver of a white, Dodge Ram truck that was in the area of 10th Street and Riverside Avenue in Paso Robles on June 10,” said Sheriff’s spokesman Tony Cipolla. “The truck

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was seen leaving the area around 4:20 a.m., approximately 1 minute before the suspect, Mason James Lira, began shooting” at the Paso Robles Police Station.

If anyone witnessed anything related to the incident and have not already spoken to detectives, you are asked to contact the Sheriff’s Office at that same number.

It began at about 3:45 a.m. in the 900 block of Park St., at the Paso Robles Police Station, when an unknown man began shooting a gun at the stationhouse. Paso police requested Sheriff’s and Highway Patrol assistance but when backup arrived, the gunman started shooting at them. A Sheriff’s patrol with two deputies was among them, searching for the suspect in the Downtown area.

At about 4:19 a.m. the two deputies came under fire and one of the deputies was shot in the face by the assailant. That deputy, Nicholas Dreyfus, 28, out of the Templeton Sheriff’s Substation, was pulled to safety by his partner, who also rendered medical aid. The suspect vanished into the night.

A full-blown manhunt was begun for the armed and dangerous suspect who evaded police until resurfacing again in the Salinas River Bed near Ramada Drive and Highway 46.

After another shootout with the suspect, three more law enforcement officers — a Highway Patrolman, an Arroyo Grande Police sergeant, and a Kings County deputy sheriff — were wounded in the shootout that took place in a vineyard.

The suspect, Mason James Lira, 26, a transient from Monterey with a long, violent criminal history was shot and killed in the exchange of gunfire.

None of the deputies and officers was seriously injured, though Dep. Dreyfus was airlifted to an out of the area hospital and treated for a head wound. He is expected to recover from his wound.

Now, with the Sheriff’s Office in charge of the investigation, detectives are asking for help with loose ends.

The white Dodge Ram they seek has a quad cab with a silver toolbox in the bed, Cipolla said, and possibly chrome rims.

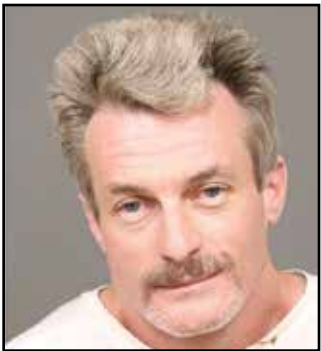
In a blurry and dark photo of the truck included with the news release, the license plate is unreadable. The Sheriff’s investigators are asking anyone with information or the driver of the truck to contact detectives at 805-781-4500 or Crime Stoppers at 805-549-7867 (STOP), or see: www.slotsip.org for online tips.

The Sheriff’s Office also put out a call asking for anyone with surveillance camera footage that might be helpful to their investigation to come forward.

“Sheriff’s Detectives are asking residents and business owners who may have video footage from anytime during the night of June 9 to the afternoon of June 11 to contact the Sheriff’s Office. Detectives are requesting any surveillance footage from the downtown Paso Robles area, as well as businesses surrounding the intersection of Highway 46 and Ramada Drive.

“Possible sources of video may be home surveillance cameras or doorbell type cameras,” Cipolla said. “If you have video footage from the dates and locations indicated, please contact the Sheriff’s Detective Division at (805) 781-4500.”

Visalia Man Arrested in San Simeon



Jerrod LaRue

Sheriff’s deputies arrested a Visalia man for suspicion of attempted murder after he allegedly tried to pitch his girlfriend off a motel balcony in San Simeon.

According to Sheriff’s spokesman Tony Cipolla, deputies were dispatched to a domestic disturbance at 12:30 a.m. Saturday, June 20 at the Silver Surf Motel, 9300 Castillo Dr., in San Simeon Village.

“When deputies arrived,” Cipolla said, “the female victim reported she and her boyfriend had gotten into an argument when the boyfriend struck her in the head with his fist. The victim then retreated to the balcony of the second story room.

“According to the victim, the suspect threatened to kill her and then attempted to throw the victim over the balcony railing. However, the suspect’s attempts failed and the victim was able to call 9-1-1.”

Deputies arrested Jerrod LaRue, 42 of Visalia, on suspicion of attempted murder and booked him into County Jail.

County Improving COVID Testing

By Neil Farrell

Diagnosed cases of the coronavirus continue to mount in San Luis Obispo County, and the health department is calling for more testing to be done and is greatly boosting its contact tracing efforts even as the State calls on residents

to wear masks to slow the spread.

“The County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department is expanding its contact tracing team to 24 people, approximately tripling its size, to help in the fight against COVID-19 in local communities,” reads a news release from Michelle Shoresman, the County’s public information officer for the pandemic.

“We are working hard to manage the spread of COVID-19 in SLO County,” said SLO County Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein. “If you have been exposed, we will call you and ask you to self-quarantine at home based on when you were exposed. Help us slow transmission and answer the call to manage the spread.”

So far, the County’s tracers have been able to investigate all the reported COVID-19 cases but their workload increases with each new case. The numbers of contacts per case — the people who may have been exposed to the virus by one person who is sick — have also increased as the community reopens the economy.

Contact tracing “is a time-tested public health practice in which trained investigators follow up on each case to identify those who may have been exposed to the disease. They ask how the patients are doing, issue isolation orders, and help connect them with care and services, if needed,” said Shoresman.

Tracers notify people who may have been exposed, Shoresman said, without disclosing where or by whom, issue quarantine letters, and organize free testing and other services if needed. Those at high risk receive daily follow-up calls. Throughout the process, all personal information, including names, is kept confidential.

In conjunction, the County has greatly stepped up its COVID-19 testing program for high-risk residents, using a new tool that speeds up getting test results.

According to another press release from Shoresman, “The County Public Health Laboratory recently began running COVID-19 test samples through a device called the Panther, which allows public health microbiologists at the laboratory to now test up to 300 samples per day.”

“Increasing our testing capacity in SLO County helps all of us,” said Dr. Borenstein. “One of the State’s metrics for staying open involves testing. At the same time, increased testing capacity also supports our contact tracing efforts, which we’ve recently expanded to meet our community’s growing needs.”

The lab will prioritize testing from time-sensitive and higher-risk situations, Shoresman said, including health care workers and public health contact investigations.

“Fast results in these cases can help protect more people from being exposed to COVID-19 and can help connect vulnerable patients with appropriate care.”

The County lab started using the Panther June 12 and

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has since tested 786 samples.

Laboratory Director Dr. James Beebe called the Panther a “workhorse.” He said they use the tool daily in the diagnosis of other communicable diseases, as well.

In other coronavirus news, the City of Morro Bay is shutting down its community response program, launched in March and manned by City employees and volunteers.

“Since its inception nearly 100 days ago,” reads a news release from Recreation Services Manager, Kirk Carmichael, who has been overseeing the program for the City in recent weeks. “City volunteers, Morro Bay CERT [Community Emergency Response Team], have made over 7,500 calls assisting Estero Bay community members with grocery and/or RX needs.”

With the Morro Bay Cares Program placed on hold until further notice, Carmichael said in the interim, Morro Bay Cares will take the form of “Morro Bay Connects,” with the intent of pairing up those who need help with volunteers in the community.

“The Morro Bay Cares program was put together though a collaboration of the City and a local volunteer base lead by local residents, Marty and Roni Lomeli. The program later transitioned to the City’s Recreation staff, who have done a fantastic job fielding the various calls, coordinating efforts with volunteers, and serving the Estero Bay community. Equally, the time and efforts put forth by our citizen volunteers is a true reflection of the kind and caring people found here in our community.”

For more information on this program and other general information on City programs and efforts on COVID-19 see: www.morrobayca.gov/covid19 or call the Morro Bay Connects line at (805) 772-0678.

And in Statewide coronavirus news, Gov. Gavin Newsome has decreed that everyone needs to wear a facemask, as statewide cases continue to climb.

The State is requiring “face coverings” in high-risk settings. “Today’s guidance,” Shoresman said, “mandates the use of cloth face coverings by the general public statewide when outside the home, with limited exceptions, including children under the age of 2, people who have medical or mental health conditions that prevent wearing face coverings, and people who are eating or drinking at a restaurant or establishment that offers food or beverages, and others.”

Dr. Borenstein added, “Wearing face coverings can slow the spread of COVID-19 and can potentially stop waves of outbreaks, which helps us continue to fully reopen our economy. This requirement offers an additional layer of protection for all of us, especially workers in our favorite places.”

For information on the virus response, recommendations and orders, go online to: ReadySLO.org. Or call the County’s assistance center at (805) 543-2444 Mondays-Fridays, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with questions related to COVID-19.

As of June 27, the Health Department said there have been 508 confirmed cases of COVID-19 countywide. Some 381 people have already recovered leaving 127 active cases. Twelve people were hospitalized with five in intensive care units at local hospitals. And just one person has

died, a number that perhaps miraculously has not changed since early in the virus’ rampage.

City Seeks Bids for Sewer Pipes Job

By Neil Farrell

The City of Morro Bay is seeking bids on the next big contract for its new sewer project.

The City started advertising for bids June 15 on the 3-mile conveyance system needed to pipe raw sewage out to the new treatment plant located on a hillside above the terminus of South Bay Boulevard, east of town (officially 555 South Bay Blvd.).

The deadline for sealed bids is 2 p.m. July 28, according to a notice posted on the City website, and unsealing of bids by the City Clerk is set for City Hall and is open to the public. The engineer’s estimate on this part of the project is \$27 million.

The scope of work involves “the construction of lift stations and offsite pipelines; and shall consist of furnishing and supplying labor, materials, tools, equipment, and other necessary provisions in completing the two sanitary sewer lift stations, offsite pipelines, and other appurtenant facilities for the new Water Reclamation Facility currently under construction,” reads the City’s notice.

The job has a time limit. “The work shall be completed 495 calendar days [about 16 months] from the “Notice to Proceed.”

Companies wanting to bid have certain requirements. “No bid will be accepted from a Contractor who is not licensed with either a class ‘A’ license or another license or combination of license classifications that are appropriate for the work being done and as approved by the City Engineer. The City reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, to waive irregularities, and make an award deemed in the best interest of the City.”

The job is a prevailing wage one, which means the workers should be making about \$27 an hour, straight time, and any companies wanting to bid must attend a pre-bid meeting at the site of the treatment plant at 1 p.m. Tuesday, July 7.

Bidders are also being urged to visit the job site beforehand. “The objective of the walk through is to acquaint bidders with the site conditions.”

Those site conditions changed recently. On May 5, according to the City’s recent quarterly project update, a crack in the earth opened up in a hilly area being graded flat.

“The event has been classified as a soil slip or landslide with a volume of approximately 30,000 cubic yards,” according to the report. “The soil slip was evaluated by several geotechnical firms and the issue has resulted in a change to the grading plans for the upper area of the site.”

The landslide will of course have a price, but who will

pay? “Dealing with the soil slip and design changes has a cost, but it has not yet been determined who will be responsible for the additional costs [i.e., City or design-build team, or shared cost].”

The conveyance system is the second major portion of the project that will build a new treatment plant, and recycle the treated effluent by piping it back into town where it would be injected into the Morro Creek groundwater aquifer and extracted again via the City’s existing water wells at Lila Keiser Park, though none of this has been settled at this point.

According to the City’s “OneWater Plan,” the City believes it can get some 800 acre feet a year of recycled water that would need to be treated at the existing emergency desalination plant, before being delivered to customers. The City wants to convert the desal plant to a full time reverse osmosis treatment plant.

Also as part of that plan, the City wants to get out of its State Water contract and give up its water rights in the Chorro Valley. State Water provides up to 1,313 acre feet a year of fully treated drinking water and Chorro Valley groundwater wells can produce over 900 AFY but are restricted by stream flow requirements for Chorro Creek.

The contract for the sewer treatment plant, which has been under construction since March, recently had its third round of change orders approved by the City Council and totaled \$5.99 million for the 26 change orders approved by City Council.

The contract for the treatment plant now tops \$70M and the overall project is now over \$130M, up from its original price tag of \$126M.

The conveyance system is far from set to build, however. The City and Dynegy Inc., the owners of the Morro Bay Power Plant are still haggling over the City’s desire to run a sewer pipeline through the side of the plant property from the No. 2 lift station (located under the Front Street parking lot on Embarcadero) to a new lift station planned for a small property on Main Street next door to the Lemos Ranch Pet Supply Store.

The City is pursuing eminent domain against Dynegy to force the Texas company into an easement agreement for the new pipeline.

It’s the first time the City has ever used eminent domain, as the City Council has always chosen negotiations to settle such matters.

A judge will decide whether the City can force the easement through and will set the price for it, too.

Still to be decided in the largest public works project the City of Morro Bay has ever undertaken is the third major portion — the recycling system, which will require installing injection wells to put the water back into the ground.

According to the City’s last quarterly update, the final technical memorandum on this (due June 19) was expected to recommend “to pursue the west injection area solely;” and “longer groundwater retention times than what was previously indicated.”

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Poly Aerospace Engineering Professor Breaks Three U.S. Records



The flexible 93-foot wings are one of the unique features of Iscold’s sailplane, named Nixus (“pushing forward” in Latin).

A unique sailplane designed by Cal Poly Aerospace engineering faculty member Paulo Iscold broke three U.S. national soaring records this month.

And Iscold has more records in his sights. “Our radar is now 100 percent focused on the weather,” he said. “We will chase good weather during the summer.”

A sailplane — or glider — soars without the benefit of engine power. With the sailplane designed by Iscold, pilots Jim Payne

and Alan Coombs broke three records on June 10, including one Payne himself set 24 years ago. The records included:

- Distance in triangle flight – 1025 km (636.9 miles)
- Speed in 1000 km triangle – 141.7 km/h (88 mph)
- Distance in free triangle – 1025.8 km (637.4 miles)

Iscold began working on his sailplane prior to joining the Cal Poly faculty in

2018. Since then, he has enlisted students from the Akaflieg club to help with his plane, named Nixus (“pushing forward” in Latin).

While ongoing shelter-at-home orders have slowed student involvement, Iscold had to take advantage of optimal weather conditions for record attempts. So he transported Nixus to Minden, Nevada, near Lake Tahoe, where record-breaking pilot Payne lives. Minden’s mountain air also happens to be optimal for glider travel, helping Payne and Coombs break records.

Payne had previously set the record for distance in triangle flight in 1996. (Triangle flights require flying a close course with three legs, Iscold said.)

As most Cal Poly students and employees remain off campus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Iscold has been staying at Payne’s guesthouse while teaching remotely.

The plane has garnered considerable attention from aviation media, including stories in Flight, Sport Aviation and Soaring magazines. One writer for the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association described the plane’s innovative 93-foot wings as follows: “While they appear straight when the sailplane is at rest in the ground, the thin airfoils flex and bend in flight to a degree that not every pilot would be comfortable



Paulo Iscold, right, speaks with pilot Jim Payne during a test run in Paso Robles last January.

seeing.” That’s not the only unique quality, according to AOPA. Unlike other sailplanes, key wing features (the flaps and ailerons) are controlled through a fly-by-wire computer system, which is a first. Fly-by-wire systems use computers to process the flight control inputs made by the pilot and send corresponding electrical signals to the flight control surface actuators.

Iscold also created a device to gauge the vibration on the wing. “I am planning to publish scientific papers about these inflight vibration measurements that we made,” he said. “I am still analyzing data.”

He hopes that students will also be able to do work related to the data. “Since

U.S. Record Continued on page 6

News Briefs

Draft Housing Element Update 2020-2028

The City of Morro Bay Planning Commission will review the draft 2020-2028 Housing Element at its July 7 meeting. All residents and interested stakeholders are invited to participate in the hearing via zoom or call-in number and provide public comment.

The Housing Element is one of seven required elements of the General Plan and serves as the framework for providing housing strategy within the city. The Housing Element identifies housing needs and is a tool to modify housing policies and programs to reflect the changing needs and conditions in the community, to respond to changes in state law, including responsibility to meet the local housing needs allocation determined by the State Regional Housing Needs Assessment.

To view the public draft of the 2020-2028 Housing Element, go to <http://morrobayca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14234/Public-Draft-2020-2028-Housing-Element>

Blood Donations Needed

After two successful blood drives at Arroyo Grande Community Hospital, French Hospital Medical Center, and Marian Regional Medical Center, Dignity Health Central Coast hospitals will again partner with Vitalant in a proactive effort to encourage community members to donate blood.

In order to bolster local and national blood supplies, Vitalant is calling on the community to come forward and give blood. The process takes only 45 minutes but

can save up to three lives. There is currently a critical shortage of blood, and all community members are asked to take the short amount of time to donate. Community members wishing to donate are urged to sign up at www.blood4life.org. Do not donate if you are feeling ill.

Despite the ongoing need, it is now especially challenging to recruit donors, which affects Vitalant’s blood supply. Donations from O-negative donors, the universal blood type, are especially important. The current O-negative blood supply sits at an approximate two-day supply, which is half of the ideal quantity needed to support patient needs. Additionally, platelet donations, which have a shelf-life of only five days, are always in high demand. However, donors of all types are needed.

Locations:

- Marian Regional Medical Center – Tuesday, July 7 from 2 - 6 p.m.
- Arroyo Grande Community Hospital – Wednesday, July 8 from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- French Hospital Medical Center – Thursday, July 9 from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Join the Diablo Canyon Decommissioning Panel

A citizen committee involved in the decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant is again seeking volunteer members to fill in its roster.

Pacific Gas & Electric and the Diablo Canyon Decommissioning Panel are looking to fill expiring terms on its eight to 11 member panel. They will have five positions open or for reappointment, and the deadline to apply is July 25.

Jim Welsch, PG&E’s Senior Vice President of

Generation and Chief Nuclear Officer said, “We remain strongly focused on the safe and reliable operation of Diablo Canyon, and at the same time we are planning for safe and responsible decommissioning activities to begin after the operating licenses expire in 2024 and 2025. We greatly appreciate the Panel’s efforts and the work they have been doing to provide meaningful and constructive feedback that has helped to shape PG&E’s decommissioning strategies. We encourage members of our community to submit applications to join the Panel so that PG&E and this project can continue to benefit from a diversity of insights.”

Readers interested in this position can get more information online at:

Members of the community who are interested in participating on the panel can obtain more information on how to apply at: pge.com/engagementpanel or diablocanyonpanel.org. New panel members will be selected by Aug. 15.

According to PG&E, the Decommissioning Engagement Panel was created to foster open and frequent dialogue between members of the local community and PG&E on matters related to DCCPP decommissioning.

“Panelists are local community members from across San Luis Obispo County who were selected to broadly represent diverse community viewpoints. The panel meets periodically on matters related to DCCPP decommissioning and the future use of DCCPP lands and facilities.”

Diablo Canyon is scheduled to shut down when the licenses for its two nuclear reactors expire in 2024 and 2025.

What to do with the power plant site and its accompanying facilities including a man-made harbor, and the enormous acreage of oak woodlands, scrubland and coastal bluffs is a great bone of contention between the company, conservationists and developers who have their eye on Wild Cherry Canyon, an area off Avila Drive in Port San Luis.

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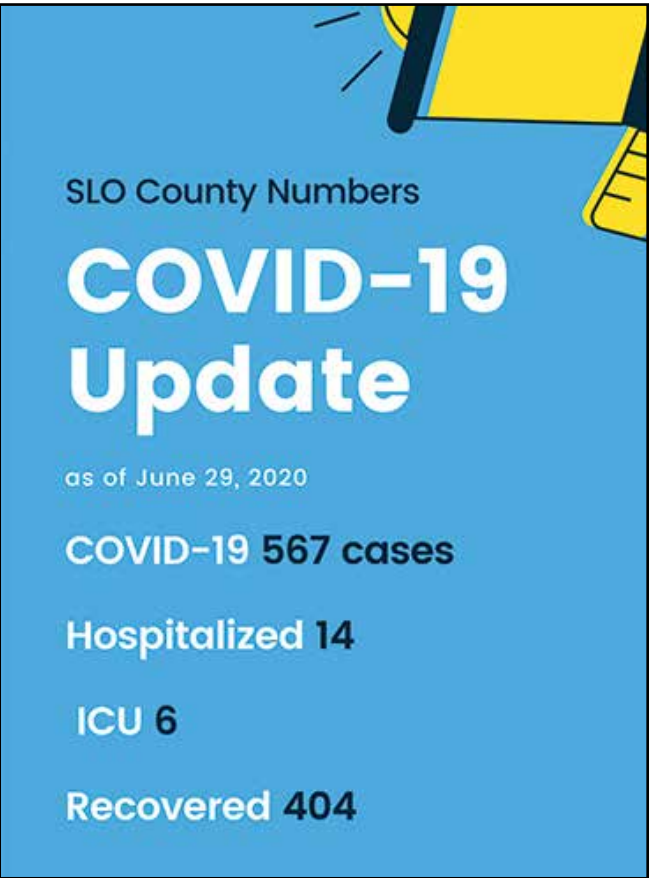
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Nearly 60 COVID-19 Cases Reported Bar Goers and Younger People

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



The County Public Health Department reported 59 new COVID-19 cases over the weekend and Monday (June 27-29) in all regions of SLO County. Public Health investigations found the largest increase in cases is attributed to community spread, including cases among people who reported going to bars.

“If our current and future local actions — supported by residents, businesses and visitors — don’t produce the necessary results, the matter may be taken out of our hands,” wrote District 2 Supervisor Bruce Gibson on social media. “If these metrics increase much further, we could see SLO County put on the state’s watch list. Over the weekend, seven counties on the watch list received state orders to close bars and eight were recommended to do so — and I understand four more counties were added to the watch list today.”

The previous COVID-19 report was Friday, June 26 when 19 people tested positive.

“Please continue to do your part to limit the spread of COVID-19 in SLO County,” said Dr. Penny Borenstein, County Health Officer. “Let’s work together to protect our economy and our community. Neighboring counties have had to recently close bars and other sectors because their cases are increasing so rapidly. We do not want to have to do that here and we need your help.”

Officials noted that, consistent with state and national trends, the new cases include many younger people. Thirty-seven of the 59 new cases are age 18 to 49. Four of the 14 local cases in the hospital, including one in the ICU, are patients in their 30s or 40s.

“We’ve heard a misconception that this disease doesn’t affect young people and that is simply not true,” said Dr. Borenstein. “While the risk increases with age, younger adults in our community are still at risk. Stay home if you’re sick, avoid large gatherings, stay six-feet away from others in public, and wear a face covering in public if you can.”

Gibson added, “This is serious. If you are in that age range, I urge you to think carefully about your responsibility to protect yourself and your community. If you have friends and family in that age range, let them know how

important this is.”

San Luis Obispo County has had 567 confirmed COVID-19 cases to date. Out of 21,611 tests conducted, the SLO Public Health Lab confirmed 129 and private-in-dustry labs confirmed 438.

SLO County continues to meet criteria set by the State of California to show stability, and local cases remain lower than in neighboring counties. For example, Santa Barbara County has had a total of 2,712 cases, and Kern County has had 4,548 confirmed cases. The County now (June 29) has 162 active cases, with 148 recovering at home and 14 hospitalized (6 in ICU). There has been one coronavirus related death in SLO County.

For updates on COVID-19 in SLO County and to see the full text of these orders, visit ReadySLO.org. A staffed phone assistance center at (805) 543-2444 is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to assist with questions related to COVID-19.

Library Branches to Open

Seven branches of the County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries will reopen to the public on July 7. Hours of operation will be 10 a.m.- 5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday at the Atascadero, Cambria, Morro Bay, Los Osos, San Luis Obispo, Arroyo Grande, and Nipomo branches, with a one-hour window for vulnerable populations from 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.

Because there is a limited number of people that the library can safely admit into its facilities, they ask that patrons place holds at slolibrary.org, call in requests, or browse online collections in advance for the materials they wish to take home.

“Library staff are eager to assist you in finding your next book, movie, or assist you with accessing our numerous electronic media platforms—streaming movies, digital magazines, ebooks, audiobooks, and databases,” said County Director of Libraries Chris Barnickel.

A few computers will be available at each branch for 20-minute Internet sessions in addition to mobile printing. All branches follow State and County COVID-19 guidelines, and the following precautions will be taken:

- Patrons will be asked to maintain physical distancing and to wear a face covering while visiting the library.
- In-house magazines, newspapers, passport services, and Friends of the Library bookstores will not be available at this time as branches are providing only Grab-and-Go services.
- No seating will be available for leisure reading, and program rooms will remain closed until further notice.

For more information or answers to your questions, contact your local library branch, or you can “Ask a Librarian” at www.slolibrary.org.

County Seeks Suicide Prevention Grant

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to wage war on humanity, San Luis Obispo County is seeking a State grant to help beef up its services to folks feeling suicidal because of the virus’ impacts.

SLO County’s Behavior Health Department applied for a \$515,000 grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration’s (SAMHSA) 2020 COVID-19 Emergency Response for Suicide Prevention program to cover increased demand for services.

If the grant is awarded, it would cover from June 30 to Oct. 31, 2022, some 16 months. The money would go to “address suicide prevention, early intervention, and treatment,” according to a County report.

The department applied for the grant in May and went to County Supervisors in June to retroactively approve the application. “The funding opportunity was released on May 12, 2020 with a 10-day application period [applications were due May 22],” according to the report.

The grant monies would be spent in conjunction with local domestic violence assistance centers and mental health organizations. And a quarter of the monies are required to be spent addressing domestic violence.

“This grant is specifically offered to agencies responding to a higher occurrence of major depression and suicide related to the COVID-19 emergency and requires that 25% of the grant proposal address domestic violence,” the County said.

The program’s requirements identified eligible applicants — behavioral healthcare organizations and community-based service providers — able to meet psychiatric and psychosocial needs of clients.

The County contacted three local organizations, RISE, Stand Strong, and Transitions Mental Health Association, who helped with the application.

The County’s goal “is to establish a Suicide Triage and Response Team [START] to increase evidence-based practices for intervention and treatment, increase connections between hospitals and inpatient psychiatric facilities with outpatient mental health and substance use treatment, and build community capacity for wellness and recovery.”

The SAMHSA grant would:

- Develop and implement a plan for rapid follow-up of adults who have attempted suicide or experienced a suicidal crisis after discharge from emergency departments and inpatient psychiatric facilities;
- Establish follow-up and care transition protocols to help ensure patient safety, especially among high risk adults in health or behavioral health care settings who have attempted suicide or experienced a suicidal crisis, including those with serious mental illnesses and/or substance use disorder(s);
- Provide, or assure provision of, suicide prevention training to community and clinical service providers and systems serving adults at risk;
- Work across state and/or community departments and systems in order to implement comprehensive suicide prevention;
- Provide suicide screening and assessment and appropriate clinical treatment services required as a result of the assessment;
- Provide community recovery supports to assist individuals who have attempted or are at risk for attempting suicide, including supports for impacted household members;
- Service provision must include tele-health options given the current pandemic situation, available by telephone only and by audio-visual service provision; and,
- Provide enhanced services for victims of domestic violence and their dependents including a safe place to stay in the event that individuals are unable to remain safely in the home setting.

The County’s suicide prevention coordinator “will be involved in training and activities related to the County’s Suicide Prevention Plan, which includes partnership with the community Suicide Prevention Council.

U.S. Record From page 5

we can measure, now I can have students use the data or use the system to capture data in other conditions,” he said.

One record Iscold and Payne are eyeing is the longest distance covered by a sailplane. The record is 1,864 miles.

When asked what lessons he has learned from Nixus, Iscold’s response matched the plane’s “pushing forward” name: “Never give up,” he said.

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Community

County Testing for CV-19



Estero Bay News reporter, Neil Farrell, is about to take a free, COVID-19 test on June 17, administered by the County Health Department at a special pop-up testing site at the Morro Bay Vet's Hall.

The test consisted of a technician, decked out in protective gown, pants, shower cap, mask, glasses and gloves, sticking a cotton swab deep up Farrell's nostrils — both sides — for 5 seconds each.

Farrell said it was somewhat uncomfortable and made his nose tickle as if he had to sneeze, but was over quickly and soon forgotten. He said residents should think about getting tested, given the amount of concern that's going around.

"The County's pushing real hard to test as many people as it can," said Farrell. "There was no charge and all I had to do was show identification [Driver's License]. They didn't ask where I live or anything personal at all. I gave them my cell phone number and they were supposed to text me my results after a couple of days. I think everyone should get tested — while it's still free."

What were his results? "I don't have the virus," Farrell said, with a modicum of relief.

The County has several permanent testing sites and will be doing these pop-up test sites around the County, see: www.readyslo.org for a schedule of upcoming pop-up clinics and for information on the Coronavirus response in SLO County.

Dignity Urges People to Make Health a Priority

With COVID-19 cases on the rise in both San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties, as they have been across the nation, Dignity Health Central Coast hospitals are reminding community members that the coronavirus is still prevalent.

According to a press release the COVID-19 pandemic is not behind us, and as our counties continue to experience increased coronavirus cases, Dignity Health Center Coast urges community members to continue to make their health and safety a priority by:

Wearing a mask when outside your home, when you may come in contact with other people. Doing so can keep someone who has COVID-19 and is displaying no symptoms from passing the virus on to someone else. We know that the virus spreads from person to person when someone coughs or sneezes near someone else. Masks can keep those COVID-19 droplets from reaching another person and infecting them. We know there are conflicting thoughts about wearing masks, but we encourage you to be considerate and wear a mask in public.

Keeping a distance of six feet between you and others outside your home. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that COVID-19 is mostly spread between people who are within six feet of one another for a prolonged period of time. Keeping more than six feet of distance between people helps reduce the likelihood that the virus can spread. Protect your own personal space and stay six feet apart.

Washing your hands on a regular basis. Use soap and water as much as possible and wash them for 20 seconds or longer. The CDC indicates that handwashing can prevent 20 percent of respiratory infections. If handwashing is unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Avoid touching your face. We carry many germs on our hands and our eyes, noses, and mouths are gateways for a COVID-19 infection. People touch their faces an average of more than 20 times an hour. So, be mindful of keeping your hands away from your face.

Staying home when you are sick. When you are sick and you go to work or even out to the grocery store, you are putting others at automatic risk. When you are sick, please stay home.

Dignity Health Central Coast has taken extensive measures to ensure the continued safety of patients and staff:

- At each of our facilities, everyone is screened prior to entry
- Masks are required, and are provided to anyone in need
- Visitor limitations policies are enforced
- Enhanced disinfectant protocols maintain a clean environment
- Those that have COVID-19 symptoms are cared for in separate areas

For the latest information on hospital preparedness, visit: www.dignityhealth.org/centralcoast/coronavirus.

CLC Looking for 'Citizen Scientists'



The Cayucos Land Conservancy is looking for "citizen scientists," to document the plants and animals at the Estero Bluffs State Park

Are you itching to let loose your inner "Bill Nye — the Science Guy?" Cayucos Land Conservancy may have a program to fill up your test tube.

CLC is looking for "citizen scientists," to document the plants and animals at the Estero Bluffs State Park, the coastal bluff top adjacent to Hwy 1 north of Cayucos proper.

Estero Bluffs was the first-ever conservation project by the CLC back in the 1990s. Property owners had proposed a large subdivision for the coastal bluff and the community rose up in opposition, forming CLC and stopping the project.

They were able to pull together the money to buy the property, and donated it to the State Parks Department. It remains open space and a natural area open to the public but has no amenities like a restroom or drinking water.

CLC is working through the www.iNaturalist.org website to sign up volunteers. The program is easy and informal as well.

Simply download the iNaturalist app onto your smart phone. Then whenever you head out to the bluffs, take pictures with your phone of animals and plants that you

Citizen Scientists Continued on page 9

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Police Blotter



Morro Bay Police Logs

- **June 21:** Police were asked to help serve a stay-the-hell-away-from-me court order on some scamboogah in the 3000 block of Ironwood.
- **June 21:** Santa Maria Police asked for help dealing with a case in the 1000 block of Main. Logs indicated they had an arrest warrant for a member of the illuminutty for suspicion of stalking.
- **June 20:** Police responded at 9:30 p.m. to a disturbance in the 400 block of Monterey. Logs indicated a 25-year-old fellow was nicked for suspicion of disorderly conduct and being schnuckered in public. He was put out of our misery in County Jail.
- **June 20:** Police responded to a bicycle crash at 3:12 p.m. in the 1300 block of Embarcadero. Logs indicated the front tire came off a bicycle ridden by a 12-year-old kid, who went a*-over-teakettle and landed face first on the pavement (OUCH!). He or she suffered cuts to the face and will no doubt never work on their own bike again.
- **June 20:** Police stopped a suspicious car at 2 p.m. in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd. Logs indicated the woman driver, 68, had a suspended license and was cited and released into a brave new world of bus riding.
- **June 19:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 11:41 p.m. in the area of Pacific and Embarcadero. Logs indicated the 26-year-old all star was allegedly high on drugs and in possession of drugs and got himself drug off to the hoosegow.
- **June 19:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 10:43 p.m. at Rite Aid on Quintana. Logs indicated the slapdash hombre, 48, was arrested for suspicion of being smacked on drugs.
- **June 19:** Police responded at 10 p.m. to the launch ramp in the 300 block of Embarcadero for a report of some unknown maniac brandishing a knife. No injuries reported and the ruffian apparently slithered away in the night.
- **June 19:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 7:49 p.m. in the 700 block of Quintana. Logs indicated they came across another citizen of the year who was arrested for suspicion of being stoned and possession of paraphernalia, his stash apparently gone or too well hidden.
- **June 19:** A citizen turned in a cell phone that he or she found walking on the beach in Cayucos.
- **June 19:** Police responded at 2 p.m. to the 400 block of Hillview to an un-neighborly dispute. A woman said a tree trimming company trimming her neighbor’s tree damaged her property, also called a Morro Bay felony.
- **June 19:** A business owner in the 2000 block of Main told police that some feculent fraud made two phony checks with her business’ name on them and cashed one of them.
- **June 19:** A man in the 200 block of Pacific said some unknown person broke into the locked camper shell of his

- U.S. Forest Service truck and stole a bunch stuff.
- **June 19:** Police responded at 3:23 a.m. to a domestic disturbance in the 1100 block of Morro. Logs indicated they documented a domestic dispute that happened in front of some children, no doubt a regular event with mommy and daddy Bickerson.
 - **June 18:** A citizen turned in a Sawzall they found on Hwy 1 at Yerba Buena that apparently fell off a work truck.
 - **June 18:** Police were called at 8 a.m. after multiple residents in the 200 block of Kern said hooligans had egged their homes and they’d found broken glass in their front yards.
 - **June 18:** Police responded to Del Mar Park at 9:43 a.m. City parks workers said someone stole a wind screen off the tennis courts, in the latest example that people will steal anything.
 - **June 18:** A citizen in the 200 block of Kern reported an “ongoing peace disturbance” involving a 54-year-old apparent zlub.
 - **June 17:** A citizen in the 2900 block of Sandalwood reported getting threats electronically, which is why God invented call blocking.
 - **June 17:** Police are investigating a case of alleged domestic battery in the 1000 block of Market.
 - **June 17:** Police are investigating a reported burglary at a house under construction in the 3400 block of Toro Ln.
 - **June 17:** Police responded at 12:45 p.m. to a car crash in the 300 block of Surf. No juicy details were available. Oddly, at 9:35 a.m. that same morning and at that same address, officers contacted a woman, 44, who had two bench warrants and she was off to see the wizard.
 - **June 17:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow, 38, out at the suspect time of 12:18 a.m. at Main and Hwy 41. Logs indicated he was taken into custody on a mental health 72-hour hold after having an apparent bag lady moment.
 - **June 16:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 9:30 p.m. at Main and Harbor. Logs indicated the driver, 27, was nicked for suspicion of driving with beer goggles. He was cited and released and could probably really use a drink about now.
 - **June 16:** Police contacted a familiar face, 49, with a warrant in the 200 block of Kern. He was cited and let go under the catch-and-release job security act.
 - **June 15:** Police responded at 2:30 p.m. to the 200 block of Beach where some glowworm was causing a dustup at a community garden.
 - **June 14:** Police responded at 10:16 a.m. to Morro Bay High after someone found an industrial drill over by the football stadium, where apparently some screwball left it.
 - **June 13:** Some pirate stole an outboard motor from the 100 block of Bayshore Dr.
 - **June 13:** Police responded at 11:22 a.m. to a traffic accident at Quintana and Main. Logs indicated they arrested a 59-year-old man for suspicion of driving wrecked and causing a crash. Logs indicated the apparently uncooperative squit refused a breath test and then refused a blood draw. So police got a court order and took him to French Hospital for a forced blood draw and then to the hoosegow.

- **June 13:** Police responded at 4:49 a.m. to the 2600 block of Main for a report of child abuse. Officers wrote up a report for suspected willful harm to a child and will send it to the district attorney for possible prosecution.
- **June 12:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:30 p.m. in the 1700 block of Embarcadero. The driver, 54, was nicked for suspicion of driving deep in his cups.
- **June 12:** Someone found something somewhere in the 800 block of Quintana.
- **June 12:** Someone left his or her electric bike outside their home in the 1000 block of Market and of course it was stolen.
- **June 12:** A man came to the police station and told police he was aiming to get rid of some live ammunition that he found at his father’s home.
- **June 11:** Police stopped another suspicious vehicle at 2:46 p.m. in the 1300 block of Main. The 64-year-old driver was arrested for suspicion of driving honked on meth and possession. Police took the fellow to French Hospital for a blood draw and then to the Parkinson Plaza.
- **June 11:** Police responded at 3:12 p.m. to the 300 block of Beach where someone slipped and fell, landing in a potential lawsuit.
- **June 11:** Someone reported a car crash at 10 a.m. at Main and Harbor. No gory details available.
- **June 11:** Police responded to the 1700 block of Embarcadero where someone stole a bicycle trailer, proving again that people will steal anything.
- **June 10:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 6:30 p.m. at Avalon and Main. A 62-year-old tomato was arrested for suspicion of driving stewed.
- **June 10:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 1:22 a.m. in the 200 block of Kern. Logs indicated the model citizen had a felony arrest warrant and was also allegedly high on drugs.
- **June 10:** Police responded at 9:32 a.m. to Main and Kern for a minor traffic accident. According to logs they arrested a 62-year-old man for suspicion of driving stoned and running into a traffic pillar on the shoulder of the road, proving once again that traffic safety equipment is dangerous.
- **June 9:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 5:40 p.m. in the 2300 block of Nutmeg. The 35-year-old role model was arrested for suspicion of being dosed on an undisclosed but illegal stimulant. He crashed in the County lockup.
- **June 8:** Some larcenous lowbrow with top shelf tastes, stole a bottle of Hennessy Cognac from Bottle Liquor, corner of Surf and Main.
- **June 8:** Police responded to a smash-n-dash at 7:11 p.m. in the 500 bloc of Atascadero Rd. Some evidence was apparently left behind in the crash but police simply documented the matter for insurance.
- **June 8:** Police stopped another suspicious vehicle at 5:33 p.m. in the 400 block of Kern. The driver, 50, was nicked for suspicion of driving under the influence of speed but apparently not for speeding.
- **June 8:** Police responded to Rite Aid for a report of someone obtaining prescription meds “by false impersonation.”

Artists Wanted

The Cambria Center for the Arts Gallery is ready to open once again for their summer juried exhibit, but will be providing an online experience as well. The theme for this exhibit is “Monochromatic.” They encourage everyone to submit work that speaks to this theme in any creative way you would like.

Entry Fee

This fee is to be paid online using the online registration process that opened on July 1.

CCA Members \$15 per piece (no volunteer discounts for juried exhibits)

Non-Members \$30 per piece

Important Dates

Through July 7 at 11:30 a.m. – Register/submit art online

July 7, 10: a.m. to noon – Drop off your art at CCA (in the back)

July 11, 4:30 – 5:30 – Online Reception and award presentation (An invitation will be emailed and posted online)

July 11 – August 2 – Exhibition Dates

Eligibility

Open to all artists. Membership with Cambria Center for the Arts is not required, but encouraged. To become a member, go to: <http://cambriacenterforthearts.org/join/>

A link to the entry form with online payment will be emailed out on July 1.

This online form will also be linked from Facebook, Nextdoor, and their website at: <http://cambriacenterforthearts.org/gallery/>

Cambria Center for the Arts Gallery has one special request for the safety of their take-in and hanging volunteers. Anyone who is thinking about entering a piece that will require more than one person to hang it, refrain from entering at this time.

For all other information about the requirements to show, read the Art Gallery General Conspectus found at: <http://cambriacenterforthearts.org/requirements-to-show/>

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Community

Escaping Coronavirus Cabin Fever

Story and photos by Neil Farrell



The final resting place of the tugboat, CFV Point Estero.

Suffering with coronavirus cabin fever, my wife Lorraine and I jumped in the car June 21 and headed north on Hwy 1. It was a typical North Coast summer day — fogged-in from Morro Bay to Ragged Point. We stopped at the Elephant Seal rookery at Piedras Blancas, one of my favorite places. The beach was sparse with seals, and those lying on the beach were bulls in the midst of their molt. Even so, it’s always a fascinating experience at this world-class nature viewing spot. I never fail to reminisce about the days when you could walk on the beach amongst the behemoths. At various areas along the highway, lines of parked cars give away a remote or hidden beach access. With many

public beaches still closed, people were seeking out these hidden gems along the highway. The San Carpoforo beach was packed. San Simeon State Beach was closed, the campground too, but cars and people abounded at the historic San Simeon. Hearst Castle was barely visible in the fog, but it’s closed anyway. We lunched at Ragged Point, where I’d hoped to find some sunshine, but no. We were disappointed that the herd of tule elk that roam the pastures south of Ragged Point were not around; nor were the zebras of San Simeon Village. On the way home, we cruised through Cambria, which is mostly open and seemed busy but we didn’t stop. We stopped in Harmony, which is also open for busi-



The Elephant Seal rookery at Piedras Blancas during what is molting season.

ness again. We browsed the pottery and glass blower shops wearing masks. I bought a small pottery gift for my mom’s birthday next month. Lorraine got a tiny little blue bowl. The glass blower’s shop was a true delight as the numerous items showed a varied wealth of creativity. Then we got one-scoop cones at the Harmony Dairy ice cream wagon. The last stop was Estero Bluffs State Park, where I needed to take a picture for an article (does this make it a work trip?). A family was seated around an RV at one of the bluff pullouts, sipping adult beverages; groups of people were hiking the trails. The bluffs are golden with tall, dry grass lining the well-worn paths. Finally, we checked in on the final resting place of the tugboat, CFV Point Estero, sunk into the sand in a cove that I hereby rename, “Shipwreck’s.” The rusty hulk signals a sad ending for a once proud, working vessel and a reminder of the dangers of a pea soup fog and the unforgiving sea. We cruised through Cayucos, which was also busy with people, now that the pier, beach and the Vet’s Hall parking lot are open, before heading home to hunker down and hide from the virus once again. It was a pleasant afternoon, spent in some beautiful places and good medicine for coronavirus cabin fever.

Citizen Scientists From page 7 encounter. Then upload your photos to the website entering the approximate geographic location and even try your best to ID the plant or animal. It’s all very easy with the app. “Once you have completed your entry, the community at iNaturalist confirms, or suggests, other identifications right down to the species level,” CLC said in a news release. Your photos, and location data will then become part of an international survey of living creatures. Participants will help determine a species’ geographic distribution and population, monitor ecosystem health and

most importantly, allow CLC to create a list of animals and plants found at Estero Bluffs State Park. CLC’s Tom Seville is leading this program, contact him at: tseville71@gmail.com. He’ll want your user name (from the app), to track entries and build a list of species found at Estero Bluffs. According to CLC, once the Coronavirus orders are lifted, they plant to resume docent led walks on the bluffs. See: www.cayucoslandconservancy.org for information on the Cayucos Land Conservancy’s newest conservation efforts.

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Froom Ranch overview Watercolor by Joan Sullivan 1976

The William ‘Bill’ Froom ranch with its cluster of old buildings nestled against the hills, beckoned to be painted from the first time I saw it in 1971. Over the years it became the most popular ranch the Thursday Painters enjoyed visiting even as recently as 2019. Madonna Construction Company owns the ranch today.

This particular year 1976 I set about locating the resident/owner of the ranch, Bill Froom. I introduced myself and asked permission to bring the Thursday Painters to paint on the ranch. Bill agreed reluctantly and a day and time was set.

Shortly before I left the house on the date we agreed upon, he called to cancel our visit because he didn’t want students to be in the way of the cattle being moved. I was upset at the time because it was too late to notify everyone of the change.

Around ten, I parked on Los Osos Valley Road just outside the ranch, hoping to steer students clear of the area and to make alternate plans for the day. When no one showed up I cautiously drove the long driveway toward the house. To my surprise artists had already set up their easels around the ranch, and in the distance I saw Bill talking to one. Many of the students were retired, long-time county residents, and I soon discovered he knew half the class.

By late afternoon as the students folded their easels to go home, Bill had moved from one student to the next, chatting about dairying, farming, family and county history. He had a good memory and was a great raconteur. He was charming and friendly. This day he wore a blue-and-white checked shirt, blue jeans, a jean jacket and a straw cowboy hat. I never saw him without sunglasses, and his two dogs followed wherever he went.

Although Maggie Jorgensen, one of the students, and I painted on the ranch several times, this Thursday in 1976 was special. Bill took us around the ranch in his 4-wheel drive pickup, driving first to the East side of the ranch. After crossing the creek we climbed a hill to the springs. While we sampled the ice-cold well water, he explained how the 100 year old barn had been moved slowly on logs from the east side of the ranch to its present site behind the main house. He then drove us to the gravel pits on the south side of the (originally 500 acres) ranch. We got out of his truck and walked up a hill to the round barn — the only one of its kind in the County, he affirmed. It was built by Jim Aiken in 1913 for \$1800. that included materials and labor for the barn, the granary and the horse barn. Many of the ranch hands lived on ranches and even worked odd jobs for no pay just to be there when work became available Bill recounted.

So much for the good ole days.
Reference: Rounding up the Ranches by Joan Sullivan 2015

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Kitten Season is Here

By Jill Turnbow



Photo Marilyn Zahm

Kittens! Kitten season is peaking at HART in Cambria. KHART (Homeless Animal Rescue Team) is Cambria’s “no-kill” cat shelter that rescues cats and kittens from all across the county.

Currently, due to the Covid-19 lockdown, very few adult cats are being housed at the shelter. Staff is limited and many of the regular volunteers have had to cut back for their health and safety. But other volunteers have stepped up to become foster “parents.” At this writing, more than 40 kittens and a dozen adult cats are being fostered. These caring volunteers help socialize the kittens, manage their growth and help make them more adoptable.

Medical Director, Evelyn Zanella said, “We take in moms and their babies and get them used to people, then we get them spayed or neutered so they can be adopted.”

Zanella began as a volunteer at HART in 2012 in a part-time position. Soon that part time job grew into “about 80 hours a week.” She oversees all the intakes, administers meds and vaccinations, and schedules vet visits. “It’s all worth it when you see a cat that comes from a desperate situation to going home to a loving family,” Zanella said.

A separate fund has been set aside at HART specifically for cats that are in need of medical attention. The Guardian Angel Fund helps cover the medical costs for extensive tests, broken limbs, or surgeries, even if the cat is determined to be unadoptable. HART is committed to doing everything they can to give a cat a good quality of life, even if they spend their entire life at the facility.

To donate to the Guardian Angel Fund, readers can visit the website at SLOHART.org. If you are considering adopting a pet, it is possible during the lockdown. Though you can’t go to the shelter, you can see photos on their website as well as their social media sites. Interviews are done over the phone with the foster parent where you can learn all about the animal and its personality. Agreements and adoption fees are all handled by phone and then the foster parent will bring your new cat to the shelter for you to pickup. All with no contact for a safe adoption.

Folks who think they have what it takes to foster kit-

tens, can contact Foster Coordinator, Brittany Donecho. “A good foster is someone willing to open their heart and warm home to an animal in need,” Donecho said. “Kittens don’t require much space, but they need plenty of love and care in order to ensure they maintain good health and are properly socialized to prepare them for adoption. HART provides plenty of support to our foster families to ensure they have all of the tools they need to help them succeed. This includes the cost of medical care and any supplies the foster needs. The more animals our volunteers are able to foster, the more lives we can save.”

To reach Brittany Donecho, call HART at 805-927-7377. To make a donation, visit the website at SLOHART.org.

SLO Film Festival Names New Director



Skye McLennan of Templeton has been named the new Festival Director for the San Luis Obispo International Film Festival. Submitted photo

The County’s largest film festival has a new, homegrown leader and the former director is staying on as artistic director.

The San Luis Obispo International Film Festival named associate director Skye McLennan, a native of Templeton, as the new festival director, replacing long-time director Wendy Eidsen, who will continue with the organization as the artistic director. Eidsen came to the festival staff as artistic director in 2005.

“I am so thrilled to announce Skye’s promotion and look forward to continue to work with her,” Eidsen said. “She brings a wealth of festival experience, new ideas and a youthful perspective to our organization as we continue to add to the reputation we have earned across the country as an important regional festival.

“We all recognize how important it is to bring in peo-

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ple with enthusiasm and innovation to keep an organization fresh and relevant and she brings all of that and so much more to the table.”

A dual citizen of Australia and the U.S., McLennan moved to Sydney, Australia and worked in film production design on short films, features, advertisements, music videos and documentaries.

Since moving back to SLO County, she has been involved in the wine industry in both marketing and wine-making. In 2017, she launched her own rosé label, Rebel Skye.

“It is an honor and a privilege to continue working alongside Wendy, our board and staff in my hometown of San Luis Obispo,” McLennan said. “While a difficult time for our industry, I continue to be amazed by the incredible creativity, ingenuity and dedication to sharing film with audiences. With the help of my incredible team, we look forward to coming back bigger and stronger to continue our mission of bringing diverse stories and entertainment to San Luis Obispo County.”

SLO Film Fest was one of the first film fests to go online when the pandemic shut down everything.

“San Luis Obispo is known for tranquil Central California weather, wine and beer, and a festival that boosts a personalized Filmmaker Concierge for moviemakers and other special guests,” the magazine reported. “SLO also offers the truly unique Surf Nite in which surfers and ocean-lovers unite for an event that’s like a cross between a ’60s surf movie screening and The Rocky Horror Picture Show.”

The film festival's organizers have turned their attention to organizing next year's festival, which barring another pandemic, would be held in march 2021. See: slofilmfest.org for information.

A photograph showing a variety of succulent plants in small, dark-colored pots. The plants include several Echeveria with rosette-like leaves in shades of green and pink, a Sedum with small, rounded leaves, and a Crassula with thick, triangular leaves. The plants are arranged in a grid-like pattern, with some pots containing multiple small plants. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

Poly Plant Shop is now open Thursday through Saturday. While walk-in customers will be accommodated as space allows, customers may make a reservation for up to two people for one hour at the plant shop to guarantee their entrance. To make a reservation, visit polyplantshop.com. Appointments are available from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a limit of six reservations per hour.

More than 4,000 plants are available for purchase. Cost is determined by size, with prices ranging from \$3 to \$30 and sizes ranging from 4-inch pots to 8-inch succulent gardens. Additional large plants are priced accordingly. Varieties include *Crassula*, *Echeveria*, *Sedum*, *Sedeveria*, *Aloe*, *Gasteria*, *Haworthia*, *Kalanchoe*, *Graptopetalum*, *Graptoveria*, *Senecio*, *Agave*, *Peperomia*, *Aeoniums*, *Callisia*, *Cyanotis*, *Adromischus*, *Sempervivum*, and *Orostachys*, among others. In addition, a variety of indoor plants, cut flowers and orchids will also be available for purchase.

A handful of students who continued working on campus to help maintain the horticulture unit during the spring quarter worked hard to prepare for this year's unconventional sale. The student team took on the additional task of creating a Cal Poly "grow your own" project, cultivating seeds of varieties of melons, peppers, squash, cucumbers and beans. More than 30 unique vegetable varieties in 4-inch pots are now available.

For everyone's safety, all Poly Plant Shop employees and visitors must follow state guidelines by wearing a face

covering and adhering to physical distancing guidelines. No cash will be accepted — only credit cards. The campus greenhouses remain closed to the public at this time. The nearby Leaning Pine Arboretum is open weekdays and Saturdays during daylight hours.

This is a huge topic that nobody seems to know about but are directly affected by (myself included). Normally we at QuickTech stay out of political conversation because we provide service to a very broad spectrum of people with a wide variety of beliefs and political stances, and we believe it's not in our best interest to strike personal debate within the service industry. As much as we try to adhere to this, there is a bill aching to pass that effects us, the service person, directly and the consumer. This bill, currently being fought by corporate lobbyists, stands up for independent repair and against planned obsolescence or forced upgrade.

The Right to Repair state bill, AB 1163, would close a loophole in the state's warranty law and requires companies to allow consumers access to parts and service information. This means when your Macbook breaks and you take it to apple and they tell you, "Im sorry there's nothing we can do, time for a 1700\$ upgrade" you no longer have to take that as an answer. You can bring it to shops like ours, get a second opinion, and if it's fixable (usually the case), they would be required by law to give us the necessary parts and information we need to repair your device efficiently and at a competitive cost. You could even fix it yourself if you wanted to!

There is power in that choice! This would force them to practice making a device NOT meant to break and be replaced in 1-3 years. This may not seem like a big deal because repair shops like mine currently do repair Macbooks, iPhones, Teslas, John Deere control boards, etc. What you might not realize is that parts are so seldom found because most of these machines are designed to only work with Original equipment manufacturer (OEM) parts, and, guess what, you can't just buy them. We as a repair community had to adapt. What's happening right now is that factory OEM parts are being refurbished for us by third parties instead of us being able to just purchase brand new parts. Also, we are stuck reverse engineering these devices in order to understand them instead of just having this as public information. That requires an extreme amount of time and energy that we have to factor into our service rates, which make it harder to do business with the general public.

For the consumer, this bill means repairs are either quite expensive, or aftermarket parts are cheaply made resulting in shoddy work. We want neither. We want the choice to repair our own devices or to select someone we trust to repair them. This bill not only supports local businesses, but also supports a greener earth by keeping these devices in circulation thus slowing down the supply chain and keeping it all from a landfill. This will eventually force companies to build products that last again just like your 1970s off-yellow Maytag washer that is still doing a better job than this year's model.

Chad Crawford is the owner of QuickTech in Los Osos located at 212110th Suite #A. They can be reached at <https://quicktechcomputers.com/> or (805) 806-0165. Send your questions to chad@quicktechcomputers.com.

Last week's story about the new Maritime Museum member, Scott Mather, got the year wrong that he retired from the Harbor Patrol. Mather retired at the end of 2019.

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A close-up photograph of a hand holding a green pen with a gold tip, writing on a white spiral-bound notebook. The words 'To Do List' are written in cursive at the top, and the number '1.' is written below it. The notebook has a pink cover visible on the left.

Cayucos

A black and white headshot of a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie.

Scott McManus, AAMS®, CFP®
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Los Osos

A black and white headshot of a woman with dark, curly hair, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. She is wearing a dark, patterned top.

Deanna Richards, AAMS®
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A black and white headshot of a man with dark hair, smiling. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie.

Nelson Pamplona
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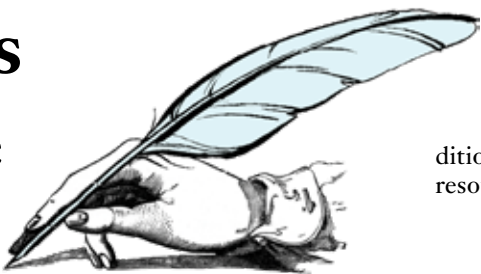
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A black and white headshot of a woman with blonde, wavy hair, smiling. She is wearing a light-colored top.

Jennifer L. Redman
Financial Advisor

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Letters to The Editor



No Water in Los Osos for More Houses

I am concerned that those proposing additional residential development in Los Osos appear unrealistic about the long-term future of the water resources there.

Los Osos relies entirely on the aquifer underlying the town for its domestic water. Since they have established a new sewer plant facility to replace the septic tank systems, which earlier served the community, that source of pollution is declining.

However, that decline is accompanied by the loss of that source of fresh water, which is now moved to the sewage treatment plant and which, as I understand it, is not yet fully used to add back into the aquifer.

The County's management efforts are touted as maintaining what appears to be a thin margin of domestic water availability to the community, but in spite of the management efforts, seawater intrusion is increasing on the western edge of the aquifer.

In response to questions about that, I have been told that it will not matter, as the domestic wells will simply be moved further east.

Though this may be a solution for the short term (long enough to perhaps build additional residences), the laws of math and physics assure that without addition of new water resources to the aquifer, or reducing the rate of pumping, sea water will continue to intrude into the aquifer, ultimately destroying the fresh water supply.

In spite of the desire for greater property development, it does not seem wise that ANY seawater intrusion into that sole resource should be permitted, either in the short or long run.

There may be a practical means of increasing the limited domestic water aquifer, and that is by capture of some of the storm water runoff which now fills Morro Bay with silt and erodes the drainage ditches and Warden creek to the east.

However, I am told by the environmentalists that, "erosion is natural" and that "Morro Bay should be expected to decline due to natural siltation," and that capture of storm water runoff is "unacceptable." In this respect I think the environmentalists have gone too far.

It seems worthwhile to study the capture of winter storm water runoff in heavy rain years for injection into the aquifer to enhance the water resources of the community.

Perhaps with success in that, sea water intrusion could be arrested and with experience there could be sufficient fresh water resources to justify construction of additional residences in the community.

Short of that it seems a serious mistake to permit additional residential demand for the limited domestic water resources in Los Osos.

Barry Branim
Los Osos Ranch

Culture Conflict

I am writing this to try to educate people in this time of turmoil. First, a basic fact: All humans on earth today are progeny of Black Africans from Africa about 2 million years ago and coming out of Kenya and Ethiopia about 130,000 years ago and migrating over earth. We all had black skin. The change to white and other colors was the result of migrating out of the equatorial zone of sunlight to northern and southern climes, which have less ultraviolet rays from the sun to produce vitamin D in their bodies. The reduction in vitamin D resulted in dark skin peoples not being able to have live births due to the softness of fetus bones. The result, over thousands of years, was a lightening of skin color in order to produce children.

In the 18th century, a German physician named Blumenbach taught courses in physical characteristics as a function of the earth's environment. For ease of identification, he used skin color.

Today, we are doing the same thing. We use skin color when we really are dealing with the conflict between different cultures. Within a given culture you may have people of a variety of skin, eye and hair color with no conflict as long as they are members of the culture. But bring a group of people from a different culture into the group and conflict invariably rises. This has been going on for many centuries and will continue until we can solve the cultural difference problem. The conflict has nothing to do with skin color, eye color, or shape or hair color. We just use color, as did Blumenbach, to identify cultures. Even within the so-called white culture there is bias against Jewish, Irish, Catholics, Scandinavians etc. because of their different cultures.

Lloyd M. Lambert
Cayucos

Housing is Good Business

Housing in California is a real issue and one that is felt in the community of Morro Bay. Studies by the Economic Vitality Corporation convincingly state that our existing businesses are at risk without more housing, and the economy won't grow until we build more. That call to "grow" couldn't be more critical now that our County and City's budgets have taken a severe hit from the economic crisis caused by our current public health emergency. It would seem that now more than ever, it's not growth for growth's sake; it's growth out of a deficit and back to balance.

The Chamber's position is that housing is good business.

Housing is economic development. Housing is also the environmental and social equity "silver bullet." Long commutes create greenhouse gasses.

We implore the City of Morro Bay to get assertive with facilitating housing construction to diversify our community's economy. Our City's Housing Element Update, a document that will live through 2028, must be leveraged as a tool that will get us to a resident population with more families, more professionals, and more consumers to take the edge off of our seasonal cliffs.

The draft housing element update can be found here, and the Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the item Tuesday, July 7th at 6pm. The Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce has delivered a draft document to City officials to express the immediacy of housing as good for business.

Erica D. Crawford
CEO Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce

Support Vacation Rental Guidelines

Residents of Los Osos worked together with the Los Osos Community Advisory Council over an 11-month period ending June 2018. Together they crafted the Los Osos Vacation Rental Guidelines.

The community came together in compromise, creating an effective set of guidelines that will successfully incorporate the use of vacation rentals in Los Osos. These guidelines are meant to preserve our neighborhoods, protect our limited housing stock for full time residents, and maintain what little affordable housing we have left. Keeping our homes filled with families and children is a priority, both for the future of our community and for the continued funding of our schools.

To be legally accepted, the guidelines will go through the same approval process as the new Los Osos Community Plan. They will be reviewed, modified, and voted on by the Planning Commission, the Board of Supervisors, and then ultimately the California Coastal Commission.

We are starting through these last hurdles and now is the time for Los Osos to speak out. The Planning Commission will be hearing Public Comment at their meeting on July 9th via Zoom. It is critical we write letters in support of the guidelines and to attend the meeting. The Commissioners need to hear from us!

This is imperative, they need to know we are serious. We do not want the solution to be the County's stripped-down version of regulations that could end up leaving us without protection. We need our entire document, it's about all of the proposed regulations working together for the preservation of our community. As that community, we need to step forward as a collective voice to write letters and make public comment if we want to see the Los Osos Vacation Rental Guidelines enacted.

Plan to attend the meeting and email your comments



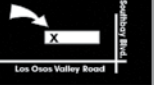
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to Ramona Hedges, Clerk to the Planning Commission rhedges@co.slo.ca.us
For news, the guidelines, how to attend the Zoom meeting, letter writing, contacts, and answers to all of your questions, please visit <https://www.neighborsforlososos.com/>

Sue Morgenthau
Los Osos Resident

High Speed Rail Needs A New Plan

I think that today, that the building of the California High Speed Rail (CAHSR) should of started in the most congested areas of California. These are the urban cities I called metropolitan San Francisco-Oakland and San Jose, along with Los Angeles-Anaheim, San Bernardino-Riverside to San Diego first, and establishing a station in the city of Santa Clarita, which is located in the Santa Clarita Valley, population of 210,089, instead of a CAHSR from Madera through Fresno, Hanford and Bakersfield.

The cost has ballooned to close to \$100 billion dollars, some of that money could of been used to build a new bridge for replacing the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, Interstate 580 (Old California state route 17) between U.S. 101 and Interstate 80 (Old U.S. 40) as well as the need for one additional bridge across the San Francisco Bay Area linking Interstate 380 near the San Francisco International Airport to the Interstate 880/Interstate 238 interchange. The number of Interstate 238 should of been routed as a California state route.

Finally, if California needs such a project, they should take the entire project apart financially and look what is being spent per month of every year, budget wise to save money!

Scott C. Presnal
Morro Bay

Protect Our Oceans

The California Coastal Commission, out of an abundance of concern for the thriving marine ecosystems in and around Estero Bay, has conditioned the Cayucos Wastewater Treatment Plant's ocean outfall permit by placing the term 'exclusive' within the permit's wording. Nobody can come along later and use this permit to dump their own garbage, detritus, brine, sewage, effluent or selenium ag waste. Meanwhile, the Central Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 3) has not yet written

a letter of their own. There are many reasons why it would be wise to do so, and not a single reason I can think of not to.

In speaking to the CCRWQCB staff representative last week, I was assured that following the Coastal Commission's lead in conditioning the Cayucos outfall permit could be done 'later' and 'should it ever be needed.' As Director of the California Ocean Outfall Group, I take vociferous exception to such a haphazard approach to coastal protection. My causes for concern include the Marine Protected Areas we now enjoy along our precious coastline. Point Estero State Marine Reserve, Morro Bay East Estuary State Marine Reserve, as well as other 'no-take' zones in the estuary. Estuaries are, as you know, the pantry of the sea, where food is made for the marine ecosystem. And State Marine Reserve's serve as areas where the ocean environment is so well protected, the ocean -in only a few short years- already shows signs of making a comeback.

If the CCRWQCB fails to back the Coastal Commission on this one, they not only put the Marine Protected Areas of our coast at risk from threats like selenium-tainted agricultural waste that Westlands Water is still looking to dispose of off Morro Bay and Cayucos, but they will be betraying their own parent agency, the State Water Board.

Note to the CCRWQCB: it is long past time to get with the program. Ocean protection is important to us.

Joseph John Racano
Director, Ocean Outfall Group
www.oceanoutfallgroup.com

Hello? Hello?

It's been three months since the federal government finally admitted that coronavirus was a deadly threat. Isn't it about time that scientifically approved masks were widely available to help citizens protect themselves as well as protect others?

R. D. Bowlus
Los Osos

Please include your full name and town you live in on all letters sent. Although we do welcome longer opinion pieces, publishing is as space permits. Estero Bay News reserves the right to edit for length and clarity.
Email letters to editor@esterobaynews.com

Yummy From page 1

says they were offered the building a long time ago and had a decision to make. "We looked at each other and asked, 'What do you want to do?'"

The pair remembered bygone days when local pharmacies had soda fountains and lunch counters, and thought they could bring back those happy memories, but with a modern twist.

They wanted to create a place where people could gather, Marisa says, a place where they could come in and enjoy a delicious treat that "brings the community together." They wanted to open a place for people of all ages, where they could come and "B" happy, she explains, air quoting the "B" that is part of the shop's and their name.

If the Bello name sounds familiar to longtime SLO County residents, that's probably because Ryan's uncle owned and operated Bello's Sporting Goods store in Downtown SLO for decades.

As a kid in Morro Bay, Ryan says he remembers Baker's Ice Cream Parlor, which used to be in the spot next door to their soda fountain [now Top Dog Coffee] for many years. It's another great childhood memory that he says they sought to resurrect for their soda shop.

Marisa says their goal is to provide a way to help relax folks who seem to be getting pulled in different directions. "We wanted to slow things down," she says.

And they have something else that could bring back a whole lot of happy memories — an honest to goodness Pac-man video game that customers can play for free — wok-ah wok-ah wok-ah.

The couple's reverence for a less complicated and more peaceful past includes their choice of vehicle. They have a "really cool" 1970s VW Westphalia van that she jokes about its lack of horsepower. "If you go uphill," she laughs, "you've gotta lean forward, put all the weight towards the front."

Their menu includes the usual delicacies that one might expect at a soda fountain — ice cream cups, milkshakes, malts, sundaes and of course banana splits, "But with a twist," says Marisa.

Among their specialties are handmade sodas, with just about whatever flavors one can imagine, topped with whipped cream, and toppings. They have made-to-order ice cream sandwiches, with a choice of ice cream flavors sandwiched by cookies and topped with whip cream. They can even make a Lime Rickey soda.

They also make an incredible "loaded" milkshake. This reporter sampled a chocolate shake and got a, well, a work of art.

The cup was first coated inside with chocolate syrup and then filled with ice cream, whipped into a shake. The already enticing creation was then topped with whip cream, more syrup and even had chocolate cake icing with rainbow sprinkles along the rim. It comes with a necessarily, extra-large straw and parfait spoon. To say it was delicious would be an injustice.

"Sometimes," Marisa says, "we top them with pie. It's very over-the-top and fun. We wanted the shop to be whimsical and imaginative for every age, or if you just wanted a party in a cup."

The business took quite a while to get opened, with a sign in the window proclaiming the soda shop was "coming soon," seemingly forever. Marisa says the building had always been a "dry" use, meaning no food service. "Turning this over to a wet establishment took us some time with the City," she says.

Ryan adds, "And right before we could open on April 1, the COVID hit."

The two had to ask themselves if they should let it go or push through and open the shop? Their neighbors were a big help.

"We're friends with Pat and Suzanne [Bietz] at Top Dog Coffee," she says. "They've opened so many businesses. They came over and raised the bar for us and helped us get opened. They have very good hearts." Ryan adds that all the businesses on their block have been supportive and encouraging — from Legend's Tavern down the line. They even got encouragement from business owners on the Embarcadero.

"The community pulled together and said, 'Let's get going again,'" says Ryan. "We're really feeling the love."

"People have been coming in and cheering that we're open," Marisa says.

They plan to expand the menu and use of the building once the Coronavirus closures are finally over and they can use their entire space, including some tables out back.

They will host birthday parties, and other celebrations like doggie birthdays, and plan to bring in some non-dairy products and expand on breakfast. They offer a breakfast banana split, says Marisa. It's yogurt, granola and topped with fruit made to look like a banana split and no doubt a delicious way to start the day.

The Bumble B Soda Co., is open from noon to 9 p.m. daily during the summer.



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Happy



social distancing and with sporadic wearing of face masks, the 4-foot sidewalks along much of the Embarcadero apparently aren't wide enough to spread people out sufficiently.

Parking is a huge issue in Morro Bay especially on the Embarcadero. The City requires adequate parking be included in developments, and has an in-lieu fee program where parking can't be accommodated that values parking spaces on Embarcadero at \$15,000 each. So the City's removal of 97 parking spaces equates to \$1.45 million worth of parking, under the City's own valuation system.

That would seem an extreme response to fight an invisible, micro-scopical virus, but it's in keeping with other odd measures that have been taken locally.

Those would include closing roads leading to beach parking lots including the Rock parking lot, the largest beachside parking lot in SLO County, and closing Atascadero Road at Morro Bay High to stop people from going out to the Pit Beach at Morro Creek. Yet the beaches remained open.

The City closed the launch ramp to everyone except commercial fishermen, and then opened it up to SLO County residents only, before changing that to allow anyone to use the public facility. But the fish cleaning station remains closed.

And of course there is the most puzzling action of all — the closing of State Park Road to all traffic by the State Parks Department, which has never been explained to the public.

State Parks opened the Main Street entrance to the Park in order to allow the Bayside Café to reopen. Bayside Café is a concessionaire to State Parks. But the heavily used shortcut from Los Osos to Downtown Morro Bay remains closed to through traffic.

The City tried posting the sidewalks on Embarcadero as one-way thoroughfares, which was largely ignored.

Harbor Director Eric Endersby said the change will turn the parallel parking areas on the east side of the street into commercial loading zones and the West side will be entirely for pedestrians.

"We're going to test it out, see how it looks and see how it works," Endersby said. He added that the City has gotten permission from the Coastal Commission to make the change without a coastal development permit process, with the understanding that these are not normal times.

Should the change become permanent, a CDP will be needed.

City Manager Scott Collins, who will be responsible for enacting these changes as the acting Public Works co-director, said, "I am going to work with businesses along the waterfront in the impacted area to help make this work for them, over the next week or so [for considerations around deliveries, trash pickup and parking]," Collins told EBN. "We are also developing plans to program the street-end areas to make it inviting, probably to include tables and chairs. Likely this will go live in a couple weeks."

The road ends in question are at Morro Bay Boulevard, Pacific and Marina streets. That would allow restaurants space to set up outdoor dining areas and businesses to put booths and sell merchandise in the streets, sort of a three-block mini street fair. Also, the Council voted to loosen up reigns on temporary vendors, which could get a license and set up shop in the street.

The Council acted despite getting serious pushback from some Embarcadero merchants.

Gregory Siragusa, and his mother, Jane Siragusa, owners of the Gallery at Marina Square were adamantly against the street closure. "We are adamantly against any closure of the Embarcadero," they wrote, "or any limiting of access or parking for any of the businesses down here. The customer base of many of our Embarcadero businesses, especially our own includes far more demographics than just the young and healthy. Meaning, many customers have mobility issues



Morro Bay Embarcadero, late June.

or have limitations in how far they can walk and move from the street, and shutting down street access would harm our business, and our ability to survive an already challenging business environment due to COVID 19."

Siragusa said their business had suffered great losses from the economic shutdown. "We all have suffered significant cash flow issues arising due to reduced customer flows and months of being closed, the reality is that any cutting of customer access to our business may be fatal to us, and many other businesses just like us." The Gallery at Marina Square has been in business over 20 years.

Mollie, Jeff and Roger Anderson, owners of the Anderson Inn and the master leaseholders that includes the Galley Grill and Bar, were also against it. "Been on this waterfront since 1966," they wrote the Council. "A perfect way to create more traffic jams etc., and lose more precious parking would be to go ahead with your closure or partial closure.

Anyone who would spend about an hour observing should come to the conclusion... It won't work.

Leave well enough alone.
We are all struggling enough trying to come out of these trying times."

Paula Radke of Paula Radke Art Design, who will be moving from Dutchman's Landing to Marina Square (both are within the closure zone), said, "This is taking your idea too far. Not all stores can put products on the streets. Please don't limit my customer's parking or access to my store. There is plenty of room to expand your restaurants to the sidewalks without this."

And Stan van Beurden of Hofbrau and the leaseholder of the site with House of JuJu, said, "Closure of Embarcadero is a bad idea. How will that help any business?

Spilling people onto the roadway is not a solution to increasing anyone's business. More importantly customers will avoid going down there plus you will be removing multiple parking spaces without a well thought out solution to that dilemma."

Former Councilwoman Betty Winholtz was concerned about the \$20,000 price tag for the closure, given the City's dire financial straits from the loss of tax revenues due to the virus' economic shutdown.

"The hoped for sales tax revenue to offset this expense is not given," Winholtz said. "Or, is this purely a health and safety move due to COVID-19? How many businesses are committed to taking advantage of this change? The Staff Report implies this may not be seen as a favorable move by the retailers/restaurants. Will the hoped for revenue go into the Harbor Fund or the General Fund?"

The City staff report said the costs for this would likely not be eligible for reimbursement under the COVID-19 emergency.

Resident Lynda Merrill was bit more upbeat. "This could be a pilot program to see how it would work. It might be fun for people to enjoy the freedom from cars.

We could offer entertainment out in the street, and open areas? Businesses could offer tables out in front of their businesses and take out and be able to serve people better?"

tionary boating expenditures; all their employees took a pay cut, himself included, of 5%-8%; and they have a part time office position that's been vacant since last December.

Mooring and slip fees are scheduled to rise, which was approved in 2019, long before the virus crisis; and commercial fishing slips are due for an increase in October, though he's unsure if that will still happen. There is also an inflation increase across the board that's due.

"We pared way back," Endersby said. "We laid off our maintenance guy, [Roger], who's now working as a volunteer and we cut the harbor patrol reserves."

Because of the City's beach closure, which was just recently lifted, they didn't get their normal lifeguard program going. But they've re-staffed the lifeguard towers.

"There were too many people on the beach," he explained, to not have lifeguards on duty. He also cut his "line items" budget 20%. "I don't know. We'll have to find used nuts and bolts to hold things together."

He noted that while the budget shows a \$20,000 surplus, there is zero money allocated to their capital improvement program. Plus, "We still have an obvious structural budget problem," he added, referring to the department having to dip into reserves to balance its budget for the past several years. They do so again in next year's spending plan. City Hall has the same problem compounding the woes for its budget that also was decimated by the virus closures and resultant tax revenue shortfalls.

And they have just \$58,000 in the "equipment replacement fund." They anticipate they'll have to replace a patrol boat soon, at a cost of about \$650,000.

But even with the harbor department running on a sliver of margins, City Hall is still taking \$286,000 out of the budget for its cost allocation program. That money is to reimburse City Hall for services like human resources, administration, accounting and the city attorney and is charged to enterprise funds like the Harbor Fund (and water and sewer funds, too).

He knows of just two businesses so far that won't reopen on the Embarcadero — Junque Love in Marina Square and Babylonian Soap Co., at Dutchman's Landing. He's unsure if there will be more.

"Most of the businesses are open now," he said, "although they're restricted, restaurants to 50 percent of capacity. Fortunately — knock on wood — we haven't had a lot of losses. Some I imagine are hanging on by their fingernails."

He speculates that some business people may be waiting out the summer before decided whether to stay open or throw in the proverbial towel.

One glaring item in the department's budget woes is an absolute lack of money for capital improvements, which total about \$5 million just for the next 5 years.

He said they'd looked at all the harbor infrastructure taking into account age and condition, and the costs to fix it. "It's a lot of money," he said. He admits the department hasn't historically funded depreciation of its facilities. And they also don't have a dedicated emergency reserve.

There could be some relief on the horizon after the City Council approved establishing RV camping areas on City property for the first time ever.

Right now they're looking at 4-5 spaces at Target Rock, 3-4 at Coleman Park, 5-6 in the Triangle lot, and a few spots by the City storage area next to Morro Creek.

They are also looking at several RV spots in the launch ramp parking lot that would be reserved for fishermen during fishing season — April 1 to Dec. 31 — and for use by anyone in the off season (Jan. 1 to March 31).

He said they are looking at charging about \$60 a night, which is more than a State Park campground spot, and more than local private RV parks charge, so as not to compete.

It will all be "dry" camping with no hookups but these spaces will have something no others have — bayside camping.

The estimates are that at just 50% occupancy, the department can raise \$130,000-\$135,000 annually, Endersby said. They'll of course need to spend some money delineating the camping spaces, setting up an online reservation and payment system, and will have some new costs enforcing and managing the spaces.

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“It’s a pilot program,” said Endersby, for about the next 6 months. The Coastal Commission, which approved the matter on an emergency permit, wanted some tent camping areas too, he added.

In those cases, they’ll need to have a restroom available 24/7, Endersby said, something that’s hard to do at Coleman Park, as the City condemned the restrooms there due to some undisclosed structural issue. They might have to bring in portable toilets.

The Commission understands that this is an emergency situation, he said, but if they decide to make it permanent, they’ll have to get a coastal development permit from the Commission.

There’s also the possibility of offshore wind energy bringing in some revenues at some future date. Castle Wind is vying to build a 1,000 megawatt wind energy farm off the coast of San Simeon, bringing the energy ashore through the old power plant outfall canal, which would require a lease agreement with the City.

When Duke Energy had the plant, it paid the Harbor Fund \$275,000 a year and City Hall got \$500,000 guaranteed minimum for the outfall canal lease. That money dried up in 2012, but could be resurrected at least in part if Castle Wind builds its project.

Then the question becomes how much of the lease payments would go to the harbor fund and how much to City Hall? Endersby admits there has been some discussion of that issue but it remains unresolved.

The outfall is a tidelands trust lease site, Endersby pointed out. So at least some of the payments should rightly stay on the waterfront.

In a presentation to the Harbor Advisory Board, Endersby wrote, “It is significant to realize, however, over the foreseeable future, Harbor-related operational service, capital asset/equipment improvement and replacement funding needs cannot be adequately met with current revenue streams, fee structures or lack of economic development or enhancement.

“Retirement in two years of the \$135,000 payments on the 1990’s South T-Pier loan from the Division of Boating and Waterways after that pier burned [in 1988], will have the greatest positive fiscal impact in the near mid-term.”

How do they plan to address all this? They first plan to implement a new Harbor Lease Management Policy. Endersby said they need to step up their management duties; find a way to better keep tabs on the leaseholders and lease sites; especially with regards to maintenance of the facilities. That would also include better auditing services.

“It’s going to take staff and we’re all stretched thin right now,” he said. “We need a way to be more efficient in managing the lease sites. Do we keep it in-house or contract out? We still need department oversight. Something needs to change, we’re not keeping up in managing.”

And in what could be the most controversial thing the Council has done since the Main Street parklet fiasco, the City Council voted to turn the heart of the Embarcadero — from harbor to Marina street — into a one-way street (see related story) to increase social distancing of pedestrians.

Summed up, the coming changes — RV spaces and the one-way street — and the deep budget cuts are “drastic measures for drastic times.”

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Major Landslide From page 1

slip material and stockpiling it for eventual transfer to the erosional feature area,” according to the report. “Dealing with the soil slip and design changes has a cost, but it has not yet been determined who will be responsible for the additional costs [i.e., City or design-build team, or shared cost].”

Assuming the City (ratepayers) will have to cover some of this unknown added cost, it would be the fourth round of “change orders” for the project that’s barely a couple of months into a 2-year schedule.

“Since the issue occurred,” reads the quarterly report, “the focus for everyone involved has been finding a solution to the problem.”

Asked about the slide, City Manager Scott Collins told Estero Bay News, “The slide has been addressed and we will work through the issue of how much it will cost and whether the City or the Design-Build team is responsible for the costs soon; likely in the several hundred thousand dollar range.”

Collins noted that another issue the project has bumped up against is compounding the problems caused by the landslide; a situation involving the State Department of Fish & Wildlife over an already eroded area on the property that the State is treating as a wetland.

“We are working through a permitting hang up with California Department of Fish and Wildlife,” Collins said. “They reviewed our EIR [environmental impact report] back in 2018 and did not have any issues with the project at that time.”

That was then, but now is apparently a different story. “Fast forward to June/July 2019,” Collins said, “Coastal permit required us to check in with regulatory agencies again. Army Corps Of Engineers and Regional Water Quality Control Board had no issues.

“However, CDF&W required the City to go through process of determining if CDF&W had jurisdiction on an erosion feature [not related to the slide area]. That process is just now wrapping up in July [typical process should be a month or so]. We have not been able to access that part of the construction site as a result of the CDF&W processing delay.

“Therefore, we may have additional costs related to stockpiling dirt, as the dirt from other portions of the site, as well as from the slide area, will go into erosion feature area.”

The quarterly report states, “Every day the contractor cannot access the erosional feature is impacting the Project negatively, and the City and Program Manager are doing everything possible to expedite this process.”

Collins again estimated that stockpiling dirt would cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, but, “This will also require discussion with the Design-Build team about responsibility for costs.”

Once again increased costs won’t affect the rates being charged to cover the project, a \$41 a month surcharge on top of water rates that have been steadily increasing annually. Rates now are \$191 a month for water and sewer for just 5 units of water.

“Overall,” Collins said, “the slide and CDF&W processing delay combined costs should not impact the total budget of the project, as there is remaining contingency in the WRF facility component of the project.”

Those contingencies are quickly being chewed up, as the last change orders, some 26 for a total of \$5.9 million, were also partially paid for out of contingencies.

The issue has project opponents raising the alarm. In statements sent to the City Council for its June 23 meeting, several project critics chimed in.

Cynthia Hawley wrote, “...The only work on the ground you’ve done so far is a seat-of-the-pants mess...”

“There is a law and good reason why you are supposed to figure out ahead of time if a hillside is stable enough to cut into without a 30,000 [since reduced to 15,000] cubic yard landslide. There is a law and reason why you are supposed to plan ahead of time where to put the dirt you cut out of the hillside before you start digging it up.”

Dan Sedley, writing for Citizens for Affordable Living said, “CAL believes it is unfair to blame the Department

of Fish and Wildlife for the permit delay to fill in a stream bed. It was City Council’s decision at the urging of City staff and/or the project manager to not gather other agencies’ permits before getting the Coastal Development Permit from the Coastal Commission. It was the City Council’s, City staff’s, or the project manager’s decision to begin grading before having the CDF&W permit in hand. That was a gamble, and it didn’t pay off.”

As for the slide, “The landslide is another error that should have been avoided with a core sample. We do not see that a core sample was taken at any point. Was a sample taken? If so, what were the results? If a core sample was not taken, why not?”

Another project critic, Carole Truesdale, said she’d stayed up all night studying the project EIR and quoted from its “Geotechnical & Geological Hazard Report,” authored by Yeh & Associates Inc., back in October 2017 — “A landslide [about 100 feet across] is present on east-facing slope west of the proposed northern WRF area and north-east of the southern WRF area.”

She added, “Additional costs associated with this landslide is the second major delay surrounding this project and, Morro Bay ratepayers should not be held financially responsible for project management incompetence.”

Collins said they notified the Coastal Commission about the landslide and got the OK to work through it. “Shouldn’t be any issues regarding our permit and will not stop the project,” Collins said. “Main issue and cost is the moving and stockpiling of the dirt.”



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