

State Park Road Still Closed

Story and photos by Theresa-Marie Wilson



Access to State Park Road off of South Bay Boulevard has been closed since March.

In March, the coronavirus pandemic resulted in the temporary closure of California State Park campgrounds. By July, 87 of the 105 were open in some capacity; Morro Bay's was not on the list.

The Morro Bay Golf Course, a county facility located in the park, is open to all county residents with social distancing encouraged, but the campground and the Museum of Natural history are closed.

"When that [closures] came down, we had discussions with headquarters all the way around," said California State Parks District Superintendent Dan Falat said. "We came to the conclusion that we are not authorized to open under those parameters because in order for us to open, we have to be open to all members of the State of California."

"One of the original plans was that the entire park would be closed, but we ended up talking with the City and working with County and County Public Health and looked at the impacts holistically."

The County, itself, has camping options available for local residents at Lopez Lake, Santa Margarita Lake, Coastal Dunes RV Park and Oceano Memorial Park. While perhaps not inclined to camp so close to home, locals have

questioned why State Park Road, which cuts through the park between South Bay Boulevard and Main Street, remains closed.

"By closing it down, it allows folks from the community opportunities for recreation. We wanted to offer those opportunities for folks to get out and recreate, but still be able to maintain the social distancing," Falat said. "We don't have a whole lot of accessible places, and that road, being very flat and wide with two lanes, allowed folks to go hike and bike and utilize the park in ways that they may not have been able to given all the constraints and all the concerns surrounding the pandemic."

Between both the upper and lower portions of the road, folks can get in about 2-miles worth of exercise. There are currently no plans to keep the road closed permanently.

Another reason for the road closure was to alleviate traffic congestion from people unaware that the campground is closed having to maneuver turning around after coming upon a roadblock.

"We have a lot of a lot of traffic not just from the local community, there is a lot of tourist traffic," Falat said. "We

Still Closed Continued on page 14

Election Lineups Set for November

By Neil Farrell



Morro Bay's race for Mayor is a rematch from the last election and there'll be at least one new council member after an incumbent decided not to run.

Mayor John Headding is seeking a second, 2-year term and will face off once again against local businessman John Weiss. The two ran in 2018 finishing in a tight race, 52% for Headding and 48% for Weiss.

Dr. Headding is a retired pharmacist who started Morro Bay Drug & Gift and sold it and retired in 2019.

Weiss is the owner of "Coast Electronics/Radio Shack" a family-owned electronics store that was started some 42-years ago along with his father, Dick Weiss.

In the race for two council seats, incumbent Robert "Red" Davis, a retired Caltrans engineer, is seeking a second, 4-year term. Last month, Davis wasn't sure he would run again, but decided to throw his hat back into the ring.

Councilwoman Marlys McPherson, who last month told Estero Bay News that she was waiting to see who else filed before deciding on running again, in the end chose not to run.

That meant extending the filing date to Aug. 12 (from Aug. 7) for the two council seats, and three other citizens decided to run, including one candidate who has been on numerous City ballots including winning two previous terms on Council.

The three others joining Davis on the ballot are 2-term

Election Continued on page 14

Planning Commission Wants to Cut Vacation Rentals

By Neil Farrell

Morro Bay Planning Commission took its first crack at the short-term vacation rentals ordinance on Aug. 18, and Commissioners want to reduce the number of permits by some 40%.

The so-called "Short Term Vacation Rental Ordinance," has been in the works for several years, as residents and City officials have been alarmed at the seeming explosion of vacation rentals (VRs) across the City and deep into residential neighborhoods.

It's the same phenomenon that's played out in other San Luis Obispo County cities and coastal towns, due mainly to a shift in the trend of what vacationers want — expensive motel rooms with limited capacity versus renting a whole house and sharing expenses with multiple families.

The knock is that turning single-family homes and condos into VRs takes them out of the rental housing market and further exacerbates the shortage of housing in SLO County.

It also brings commercial lodging operations into the midst of residential neighborhoods, in essence extending the tourism industry into where homeowners and residents try to escape them.

The City's involvement started in June 2016, when the City Council passed an emergency ordinance limiting the VRs in residential areas to 250.

The ordinance was renewed in May 2018, and the city promised to get to work on a permanent ordinance after the general plan update was completed, according to a summary issued Aug. 7 by City Manager Scott Collins.

"The Council formed a sub-committee at that time for community outreach and engagement on this important

Vacation Rentals Continued on page 14

COVID-19 - Cruisin' Morro Bay Onboard the Papagallo II

Another Small Business Survival Story

By Judy Salamacha



Cruising Morro Bay is always a joy for Papagallo II owners, Midge and Len Gentieu.

Since he was 10-years-old Leonard Gentieu has day-dreamed about owning a yacht. "It took me until my mid-fifties," he laughed. "I realized I needed to figure out how I might afford one."

After a lifelong career as a professional chef and owner of restaurants, the perfect business plan emerged. He could cook and wife Midge could help him run the business. Bay cruises especially offering fine dining were popular among tourists and locals, especially for special occasions. Gentieu knew he could create memorable special occasions.

He researched where they wanted to live, found and

purchased the Papagallo II and sailed from San Francisco Bay to Morro Bay during Harbor Festival, 2005.

"As we docked I was welcomed by one of the locals with 'Good luck trying to make it here.' We didn't let that stop us," smiled Gentieu.

And for the last fifteen years, four or five times a week, Gentieu has prepared and served gourmet appetizers and five-course dinners for up to 62 guests during 3-hour cruises on Morro Bay. Midge handles all the bookings at www.onboardnauticalevents.com.

Papagallo Continued on page 15

Police
Blotter
Page 8



Cayucos
Vet's Hall
Page 9



Face Mask
Hero
Page 15



MBPD Welcomes Three New Officers

By Neil Farrell

The Morro Bay Police Department announced three new hires reaching into the Central Valley for two and the Bay Area for the other.

According to Chief Jody Cox, Ofc. Dustin Silva comes to Morro Bay from Kern County. A native Californian, Ofc. Silva was raised in Tehachapi.

After high school, he served four years in the U.S. Navy aboard the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, U.S.S. George Washington.

He attended the Kern County Law Enforcement Academy, graduating in 2007 and worked for the Kern County Sheriff's Department before joining Morro Bay P.D.

"Dustin is considered a rare commodity," Cox said, "which is finding a seasoned, experienced lateral officer [with a highly qualified background] that is willing to make a transitional move during some of the most difficult times we have seen in law enforcement. Not just the COVID-19 issues we are dealing with, but the general state of law enforcement in our society."

Ofc. Silva brings more than 13 years of experience, and has worked as a court bailiff, and patrol deputy in the McFarland, Delano and Lamont substations, to which Chief Cox added, "some of which can be pretty rough areas of Kern County."

He's worked as a SWAT Operator, and worked several years in specialized narcotic investigations before moving to transportation and court assignments, which Chief Cox noted are more family-friendly assignments.

Chief Cox noted that during his background check, Ofc. Silva "was described as hard-working, loyal, having good judgment and critical decision-making skills. His co-workers described him as a great communicator, having great instincts and leadership abilities, a strong command presence, and being compassionate while maintaining excellent situational awareness. These are the special traits and characteristics we look for in selecting officers for the City of Morro Bay and we believe Dustin will be a great fit for our P.D. team and our community."

Ofc. Jason Ta comes to Morro Bay from San Jose where he grew up.

"Jason has been pursuing his goal of becoming a police officer since high school," Chief Cox said, "and had strong family support entering into this profession during some of the most trying times we have seen."

After high school, Ofc. Ta graduated with a bachelor's degree in Justice

Studies in 2018 and was a Deans Scholar. He completed his POST Academy Training at Fresno City College in August 2019.

Ofc. Ta worked in private security for the last 4-5 years and volunteered with San Jose P.D.'s "Truancy Abatement and Burglary Suppression" program and has volunteered the past few years with groups like "COPS Care Cancer Foundation" and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (M.A.D.D.).

Ofcs. Silva and Ta started with MBPD on April 20.

Ofc. William Alex Gillespie is originally from Fresno. After graduating high school, he attended the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and in 2009 completed a bachelor's degree in Marine Transportation.

Ofc. Gillespie attended Fresno City College Police Academy and after graduating, spent a year with the Fresno Police Department.



Officer Dustin Silva



Officer Jason Ta



Officer William Gillespie

He came highly recommended. "Alex received high praises from his former employers," Chief Cox said. "He was described as an exceptionally hard worker, quick learner with outstanding ethics and integrity, which are key qualities we look for in a peace officer candidate."

MBPD Cmdr. Amy Watkins said each of the new hires will undergo the same localized field training to get them acclimated to the city, its layout and sort-of introduce them to the community.

"The training program is the same for all officers," Cmdr. Watkins said, "Officer Silva underwent a condensed version of the same training due to his many years of experience. Officer Silva was in our training program for 8 weeks."

"Officers Ta and Gillespie will complete a 16-week field training program. This program is approved and reviewed by the State of California Commission for Peace Officers Standards and Training. All new officers attend a 2-week orientation that is not counted in the 10 and 16-week training."

"The orientation is not evaluated so it does not count toward training hours."

During orientation, officers get to know lay of the land. "The orientation," Cmdr. Watkins said, "is to help better prepare our officers so they are ready for success when they begin their patrol training. This includes city orientation, department policy and procedures, meetings with county law enforcement agencies such as the District Attorney's Office, probation, court services, mental health, coroner's office, etc."

Ofc. Silva and Ofc. Ta replaced the retired Sgt. Rick Catlett and Ofc. Maria Lomeli who left last year for the SLO County Sheriff's Department. Ofc. Luke Riddering also left Morro Bay for the Sheriff's Department but Cmdr. Watkins said his vacant position was frozen in budget cuts made by the City Council in response to the coronavirus pandemic, and the loss of millions in taxes due to forced business closures and shelter-at-home orders coming down from Sacramento.

Also, Det. Greg Gruich retired July 9 and Ofc. Gillespie was hired to replace him, Cmdr. Watkins said, and started work July 6. So the department is almost again back to full staffing.

"We still have one open/frozen police officer position," Cmdr. Watkins said.

And with the economic effects of the pandemic response continuing indefinitely, the final toll it will take on the City's budget as well the local economy, won't be known for a long time. And it's likely to be some time before that final police officer spot will be filled again.

The effects on public safety agencies is one of the talking points the City has used in its efforts to get voters to approve Measure E-20, a 1% local sales tax increase that will appear on the Nov. 3 ballot.

The City Council has all but pledged to use the \$2 million a year (in a normal economic year) that E-20 is predicted to bring in to shore up funding for the police and fire departments.



Local COVID-19 Testing Capacity Increases

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



In some counties across the Nation, the turnaround on COVID-19 test results is about 10 days, which could stymie decreasing the spread of the virus if people are not self-quarantining before receiving the positive or negative news. SLO County Public Health says that is not necessarily the situation locally.

"In general, testing results from private laboratories, we are told, are taking 4-7 business days," said Public Health Dept. spokeswoman Michelle Shoresman in an email to Estero Bay News. "Tests conducted by our public health lab take 24 to 48 hours. When someone with symptoms is identified through contact tracing, we use the public health lab for testing. This expedites our access to the results, and therefore, allows the contact tracing process to move quickly. The longer it takes for testing results to be obtained by the Public Health Department, the harder it is to conduct that contact tracing process."

Due to increased testing capacity, the Public Health Department is once again urging anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or who may have been exposed to the virus to get tested at one of the County's community testing clinics.

"We ask that when someone goes to get a test, they self-quarantine until they obtain their results," Shoresman said. "This is the best practice to ensure the least amount of spread. Also, if someone feels symptoms, the best practice is to stay home except to obtain testing or medical care as needed, so yes, that may mean staying home from work when one is ill to prevent further spread of the virus."

It is a good idea to take note of people you may have

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had close contact with (more than 15 minutes at closer than 6 feet) the two days prior to when you developed symptoms. If you need to talk with a contact tracer, this is the kind of information they will ask, Shoresman said.

Good news in the form of lower case numbers county-wide last week was welcomed guardedly.

"We are cautiously optimistic that perhaps we're beginning to see a decrease in our case counts," said County Public Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein during a press briefing on August 19 following single-digit days of cases reported. "We have been seeing these lower numbers in the last few days, as I've said, and if you were to look outside, business is not usual because of the smoke and the air quality. So we believe that the decrease in testing that we are seeing this week, that's even way down from what we were seeing last week may in fact be that people are appropriately staying home. But I do want to remind folks that we have a lot more testing capacity now available."

So how close is SLO County to getting off the State watch list, which could ease restrictions on reopening and allow customers at restaurants and salons to head back indoors?

"We're still a ways off though, from getting below that hundred per hundred thousand or roughly 20 cases a day over a two week period," Borenstein said. "We're heading in the right direction. I continue to hope and ask of everyone that we work hard to get there. What you really need to see is a full incubation period of what's going on in your county, that's a 14-day period. So it may be that people are testing less right now. People may be not feeling well but saying, 'I'm not going out to get tested in the middle of this heat wave and with smoke in the air.' So I think we'll just really need to see what it looks like over that two-week period."

On the day of the press briefing, the totally number of SLO County cases was 2579, as of August 25, the total is 2769

Testing Sites

• Ramona Garden Park Center - 993 Ramona Avenue in Grover Beach (By appointment, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.)

San Luis Obispo Vet's Hall - 801 Grand Avenue in San Luis Obispo (By appointment, Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.)

Testing is also available to those who are higher-risk (over the age of 65 OR any age with chronic medical conditions that increase the risk of severe COVID-19 illness), work in essential occupations, and live or work in a congregate care setting. Testing is available at no cost to individuals. For those who have health insurance, information will be collected when registering for an appointment and no co-pay is required.

To make an appointment to get tested, go to [EmergencySLO.org/testing](https://www.emergency.slo.org/testing). This testing is available through a partnership with the County of San Luis Obispo, the State of California, and the Cities of Atascadero, Grover Beach and San Luis Obispo.

For updates on COVID-19 in SLO County, visit [ReadySLO.org](https://www.ready.slo.org) or call the recorded Public Health Information Line at (805) 788-2903. A staffed phone assistance center at (805) 543-2444 is available Monday through Friday, from 8 am to 5 pm to assist with COVID-19 questions.

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Sheriff's K-9 Sniffs Out Heroin Dealers



Laura Nallely Ramirez Chavez



Prisciliano Cruz Garcia

The Sheriff's Department busted a Paso Robles couple on various drug charges after a K-9 officer sniffed out illegal drugs inside their car.

According to a news release, at 5:30 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 2 a Sheriff's K-9 Unit stopped a suspicious vehicle on Hwy 46 East near the Whitley Gardens neighborhood, east of Paso Robles for suspicion of speeding and an expired registration tags. A man and a woman were inside the vehicle.

"During the traffic stop, an open-air sniff around the vehicle was conducted by K-9 Rooster, who had an alert for the odor of narcotics," Sheriff's spokesman Tony Cipolla said.

The deputy searched the vehicle and, "a small baggie of suspected powder cocaine was located, as well as two Zip Lock sandwich size baggies of light-green-colored, round pills, suspected to be counterfeit hydrocodone pills."

The deputy also found some \$1,500 in cash; and it was all seized. The occupants of the vehicle were Prisciliano Cruz Garcia, 30 and Laura Nallely Ramirez Chavez, 27 both of Paso Robles. The pair was arrested and narcotics detectives obtained a search warrant for their apartment in Paso Robles.

"Narcotics detectives from the Sheriff's Special Operations Unit, San Luis Obispo County Probation Department and Homeland Security Investigations served a search warrant at an apartment in the City of Paso Robles, where Garcia and Chavez were residing," Cipolla said.

The search discovered additional counterfeit hydrocodone pills similar to that located in the traffic stop, Cipolla said, approximately three-quarters of a pound of heroin with a street value of \$10,000, nearly \$8,000 in cash, and

"evidence associated with suspected narcotics sales."

Garcia and Chavez were charged with suspicion of possession of a controlled substance for sale, and transporting/selling a controlled substance.

"The pills from the traffic stop were later analyzed at the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab and tested positive as a mixture of fentanyl and tramadol," Cipolla said.

Approximately 2,000 pills were seized with a street value of \$20,000, according to the Sheriff's Office. "Of particular note as to the toxicity of Fentanyl, 2 to 3 milligrams is considered a lethal dose."

The Sheriff's Department said pills similar to those confiscated, "have been attributed to numerous overdose deaths" in SLO County.

In 2019, 14 overdose deaths were attributed to fentanyl and 12 deaths have been reported so far in 2020. But despite the cache of deadly drugs, the two didn't stay in jail for long.

"Due to the zero-bail policy," Cipolla said, "Garcia and Chavez, for the various felonies committed, were released back into the community within 4 hours of being booked into San Luis Obispo County Jail."



About \$1,500 in cash was found during a search.



Counterfeit hydrocodone pills were found in the vehicle and home with a street value of \$20,000.



Caption: Approximately three-quarters of a pound of heroin with a street value of \$10,000 was found during a search.

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Fires Impacting Air Quality Locally

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



The Baywood Pier in the early evening during a day of poor air quality resulting from the smoke from fires throughout the state. Photo by Petra Clayton

The San Luis Obispo County Air Pollution Control District issued an Air Quality Alert in effect across the county beginning on August 18 and continuing through at least August 26 due to hundreds of lightning-stoked, wind-driven fires burning across the state.

Because a pandemic, a heatwave and wildfires aren't enough, on the afternoon of Aug. 20, Lake Nacimiento was ranked as having the worst air quality in the world with San Miguel in second, according to IQ Air, which operates the world's largest free real-time air quality information platform. Paso Robles was fifth.

On Aug. 21, the APCD issued a hazardous warning for North County via the social media site Nextdoor.

"Currently, the air quality in Paso Robles, Atascadero, and other North County locations is in the Hazardous range, and it is forecast to remain Hazardous today and to be Unhealthy tomorrow," the warning stated. "The SLO County APCD does not have the authority to issue mandatory orders, but we strongly recommend that outdoor activities in these areas stop until air quality improves."

The North Coast fared better but briefly dipped into "unhealthy" and "unhealthy for sensitive" groups including children, elderly, pregnant women and those with existing heart and lung conditions.

By Aug. 23 conditions for the coast were listed as moderate, meaning air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very small number of people. Currently, Aug. 27 and on is rated Good nearly across the county.

The Air Quality Index or AQI is a health-based scale for reporting daily air quality and is an indicator of how clean or polluted the air is, according to the APCD website. The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of pollution and the greater the health concern.

The higher the AQI, the more of the population could begin to experience health effects. The more sensitive you may be, the sooner you may notice adverse effects.

Folks were cautioned to stay indoors as much as possible, close windows, set vents to recirculate and avoid strenuous outdoor activity, if they smelled smoke.

Pairing wildfire smoke with COVID-19 is cause for concern, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Wildfire smoke can irritate your lungs, cause inflammation, affect your immune system, and make you more prone to lung infections, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that cause COVID-19," the CDC website states. "Because

of the COVID-19 pandemic, preparing for wildfires might be a little different this year. Know how wildfire smoke can affect you and your loved ones during the COVID-19 pandemic and what you can do to protect yourselves.

It is important to know that facemasks that are used to slow the spread of COVID-19 offer little protection against wildfire smoke. They do not catch small, harmful particles in smoke that can harm your health.

CDC's tips to create a cleaner air space at home:

- Use a portable air cleaner in one or more rooms. Portable air cleaners work best when run continuously with doors and windows closed.

- If you use a do-it-yourself box fan filtration unit, never leave it unattended.

- During periods of extreme heat, pay attention to temperature forecasts and know how to stay safe in the heat.

- Whenever you can, use air conditioners, heat pumps, fans, and window shades to keep your cleaner air space comfortably cool on hot days.

- If you have a forced air system in your home, you may need to speak with a qualified heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) professional about different filters (HEPA or MERV-13 or higher) and settings ("Recirculate" and "On" rather than "Auto") you can use to reduce indoor smoke.

- Avoid activities that create more indoor and outdoor air pollution, such as frying foods, sweeping, vacuuming, and using gas-powered appliances.

As fire season rages on, Cal Fire recommends people follow their COVID-19 modified Ready, Set, Go program that breaks down the actions needed to be prepared for a fire.

- Be Ready: Create and maintain defensible space and harden your home against flying embers

- Get Set: Prepare your family and home ahead of time for the possibility of having to evacuate. Pack a bag with water, food and medications for you and your pets. Learn about your community's response plan for each disaster and determine if these plans have been adapted because of COVID-19.

Ask friends or relatives outside your area if you would be able to stay with them, should the need arise. If you do need to evacuate and plan to stay with friends or relatives, ask first if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or have people in their home at higher risk for serious illness. If that is the case, make other arrangements. Check with hotels, motels and campgrounds to learn if they are open.

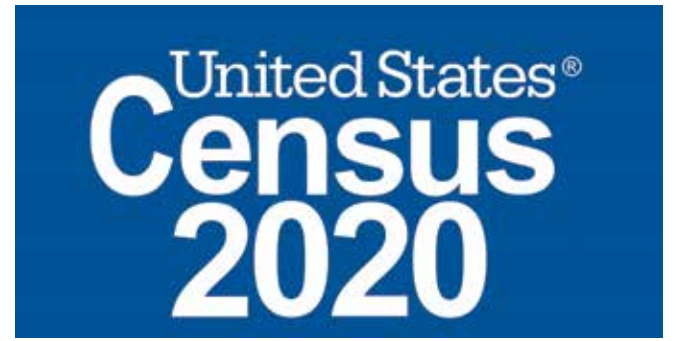
You should also have to have a communication and emergency plan with your friends and family for how you are going to get out and where you will meet up if separated.

- Be Ready to go: Take the evacuation steps necessary to give your family and home the best chance of surviving a wildfire.

Air quality is changing rapidly, for current & updated conditions visit SLOCleanAir.org.

You can also sign up for AirAware text notifications to receive important updates at SLOCleanAir.org/air-quality-alerts.

Census Takers Out Now



If readers find someone they don't know at their door clad in a protective face mask and holding a clipboard, they shouldn't fret too much, chances are it's a Census taker who's come to make sure you're counted.

With all the coronavirus pandemic worries, compounded by all the civil unrest that's gripped big cities across America, the 2020 Census has kind of been driven to the back of people's minds.

But the initial period for filling out and mailing in a Census form or filling out the form online is now passed and that means Census enumerators are fanning out to try and count those who've neglected their duties.

According to a SLO County news release, "Census takers began follow-up work in SLO County on Aug. 11, going door to door to households that have not yet responded to the 2020 US Census. The US Census Bureau recently also announced plans to shorten their in-field operations from Oct. 31 to Sept. 30."

Census takers will be wearing protective masks and the County is asking everyone to keep social distancing (6 feet apart) while they briefly take your information.

"Participation in 2020 Census interviews should present a low risk of transmission of COVID-19," said the County. "Census takers are trained to mitigate risk of transmission by universally following CDC recommendations, such as wearing a face mask, maintaining social distance of six feet or more, practicing hand hygiene, not entering homes, and conducting interviews outside as much as possible or practical."

Responding to the Census takers questions shouldn't take more than 10 minutes and the more accurate the count, the better it will be for everyone in SLO County. A complete count will help ensure San Luis Obispo County receives its fair share of funding for schools, hospitals, transportation, health and human services programs, and transportation projects.

Residents who have questions about the Census, would like further information or need help responding to the Census can call the County's Census Questionnaire phone line at: (805) 781-5011. Assistance in English and Spanish is available Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Residents can also complete the Census questionnaire online at: my2020census.gov or call (844) 330-2020.

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County Awards Tourism Contracts

By Neil Farrell

County Supervisors voted to continue with a new model to deliver tourism-marketing services to the San Luis Obispo County Business Improvement District (CBID).

While many such marketing districts hire a single consultant to handle all aspects of a marketing program, the County does something different, awarding a half dozen, smaller contracts with different firms to handle specific duties.

Originally formed in 2009, the CBID puts a tax on a room night at lodging properties in the unincorporated towns in SLO County. "In July of 2018," reads a staff report by Tessa Cornejo with the County Administrative Office, "when the marketing agreement ended with Mental Marketing/TJA Advertising, the CBID began discussing if there was a better strategy to marketing the District rather than contracting with a single marketing agency firm."

The CBID board launch "BID Bunch" in September 2018, with several vendors that provided services such as media, public relations, social media, website update and maintenance, project management, content curation, and new photos and videos. These agreements were for under \$50,000 and approved by the Administrative Office."

CBID Board embarked on a 9-month pilot program and in June 2019, recommended the Supervisors extend the program for another year. At its June 2020 meeting, the board voted to continue with the contracts for another year. But now the contracts are mostly for more than \$50,000. Supervisors on Aug. 11 awarded the following contracts:

- Lori L. Keller, \$61,500, to provide marketing support in the execution of the strategic marketing plan;
- Orange22, Inc., \$114,000 for media relation services including purchasing pass thru media, and up to \$460,000 for pass thru media services;
- Josh Morris DBA Rain Studios got an \$84,000 contract to provide photography and videography services;
- Vingage Consulting for \$98,592 to provide analytics, email strategy and marketing, search engine optimization and website enhancement services;
- Townsend Public Relations, \$78,000 to provide public relations services; and,
- Kaitlin Sturtevant \$50,000 to provide Stewardship Program and public relations coordination.

All this is intended to help the CBID carry out its 2020-21 Strategic Plan.

"The CBID is funded by a 2% assessment of the rent charged per occupied room per night from lodging businesses — hotels, motels, bed and breakfasts, and vacation rentals — within the CBID. The agreements will be funded completely out of these assessments," Cornejo's report stated.

Out of that 2% charge, the CBID gives back half to individual tourism boards from the different towns. That money can be spent locally in support of things like special events and advertising.

Diablo Panel Gets Three New Members

By Neil Farrell

A citizen's panel on the future of Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant and the pristine acres that surround it has some new members, after a lengthy search to replace some folks that retired from the panel.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company and the "Diablo Canyon Decommissioning Engagement Panel" on Aug. 12 appointed three new members and the reappointed four members to new terms.

"The panel provides community input to PG&E as the company prepares a site-specific plan for the future decommissioning of Diablo Canyon Power Plant," the company

said in a news release.

New members are: Timothy Auran of Avila Beach, Patrick Lemieux of Morro Bay and Charlene Rosales of San Luis Obispo.

Members that were reappointed were: Lauren Brown, Kara Woodruff and Scott Lathrop of San Luis Obispo, and Linda Seeley of Los Osos.

Continuing members are: David M. Baldwin of Atascadero, Dena Bellman of Pismo Beach, Sherri Danoff of Avila Beach, Alex Karlin of San Luis Obispo, Trevor Keith of San Luis Obispo County (Ex Officio), and Maureen Zawalick of San Luis Obispo, (PG&E rep.).

Panel members interviewed 50 applicants. "On behalf of the panel," panel facilitator Chuck Anders said, "we sincerely appreciate the time and effort put forth by each candidate to apply, and we're thrilled that so many experienced and talented community leaders offered to be a part of this important process. We welcome these new members and feel confident that the diverse composition of the panel

will enable the group to capture the community's collective vision related to the future decommissioning of Diablo Canyon."

The new appointees replace Frank Mecham and Dr. Nancy O'Malley, as well as an additional role created by the conversion of Trevor Keith's role on the panel to that of an Ex Officio member.

Anders explained that for the purposes of the panel, the "ex officio" position "represents an organization that is deemed important to the mission of the Panel, in this case the County of San Luis Obispo. The position is advisory and does not participate in any decision process."

Keith is the County planning director and whatever is decided upon for the property's future, the County Planning Department will be the lead agency on land use and zoning decisions.

"We have benefitted from the many contributions of

Diablo Panel Continued on page 6

News Briefs

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Los Osos Land Use Meeting Change

The Los Osos Land Use Committee meeting date has changed.

With respect to Labor Day, the Land Use Committee will hold its September meeting on August 31 at 7 p.m.

LUC has posting the two referral packages to be discussed on the LOCAC website. The Back Bay Inn is proposing a new building off 1st Street, and the Baywood Inn is reconfiguring its parking and outdoor landscaping. Folks can find these projects <http://locac.info/meetings/land-use-committee>.

The LUC is the voice for land use issues affecting Los Osos. Land use includes developments, outdoor recreation, open space, zoning and more. They review and make recommendations regarding all minor use permit applications. They also seek input from the public regarding the community's land use priorities and goals then research and advise regarding major ordinance and policy changes.

Invitations to the Zoom meeting will be found in the LUC agenda when it is posted.

Book Signing



Join authors Therese Vannier and Michael Corbin Ray for a book signing of their latest novel, "Dead Reckoning" at Coalesce Bookstore on Saturday, September 12 from 1 to 3 p.m. "Dead Reckoning" is an historical fiction story inspired by the Honda Point disaster. The book follows the lives and passions of a group of enlisted sailors on liberty in San Francisco as their paths cross with an anxious diplomat recently returned from Japan. When that diplomat turns out to be a friend of their own captain, a series of minor conflicts and animosities builds to sudden tragedy and a night on the water that no man will forget—if they can first find a way to survive.

"Dead Reckoning" publishes on September 8, the 97th anniversary of the tragedy.

Chamber Elections

The Morro Bay Chamber of commerce will hold its annual election for the Board of Directors in October. They have three seats opening for a three-year term commencing in January of 2021. Given the unique challenges and opportunities brought on by the COVID pandemic's impact to our economy, Board service at this time offers the chance to truly make a difference. Interested parties should call the Chamber at 805-772-4467, for more information.

Beach Work

If you are planning to head down to the shore in Grover Beach for some time in the sweltering heat be aware that California State Parks has approved a project that may temporarily impact your next visit to Pismo State Beach.

The parking facility at our Grand Avenue park entrance in Grover Beach will be busy with construction activity over the next six weeks. Beginning Monday, August 24, crews will be at the parking facility and within the city of Grover Beach for the coming weeks and months working on a submarine cable project that will expand global data connectivity. Temporary fencing will be installed, some parking areas will be temporarily unavailable and there may be associated noise impacts during business hours while visiting the park. To learn more about this project, go to <https://www.slc.ca.gov/ceqa/rti-grover-beach/>.

Maritime Museum Fundraiser

The Third Anniversary Celebration of the Maritime Museum fundraiser takes place Sept. 29 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. at 1210 Embarcadero in Morro Bay.

Tickets are \$15 for a whole smoked chicken or \$30 for a full rack of smoked pork ribs, both prepared by Tognazzini's Dockside restaurants. Add a collector's edition of Kelsey See Canyon Vineyards Viognier wine for \$20.

For tickets, call Bonnie Jones at 602-526-4367 or Kendall Welch at 415-307-3195 or at the museum from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Sept. 12 – 20.

Send your news, community and business briefs to Editor@EsterBayNews.com. Be sure to include the who, what, why, where and when information along with a contact person.



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News

Diablo Panel From page 5

Frank Mecham and Nancy O'Malley on this panel," Anders said, "and we sincerely thank them for their insights and efforts."

Finally, Zawalick, who leads PG&E's decommissioning program, will now represent the company on the panel, taking the seat previously held by Chief Nuclear Officer, Jim Welsch.

The Engagement Panel is a forum to facilitate the 2-way flow of information between local community members and PG&E on matters related to the plant's decommissioning. Started in 2018, the panel meets regularly to discuss decommissioning topics important to the community such as future use of the facility and lands surrounding the Diablo Canyon Power Plant.

See the Panel's website at: DiabloCanyonPanel.org for information or to submit questions and comments to the panel.

Lightning Strikes Probable Cause of Cayucos Fires

By Neil Farrell



This photo taken by San Luis Obispo City Fire shows a San Luis Obispo City firefighter with City Eng. 6 lighting backfires ahead of the Whale Fire. This tactic helps strengthen containment lines by removing fuels before the fire front reaches the area, the department said in a tweet.

Firefighters battled two, lightning-sparked fires in the hills east of Cayucos last week, limiting the largest fire to about 300 acres and the other to even less.

On August 15, a dry lightning storm passed through California sparking blazes up and down the state including several in SLO County and two near Cayucos.

Cal Fire battled the Cayucos fires, called the "3-2," and "Whale Fire," with help from fire stations throughout the County.

Another blaze, the "2-2 Fire," was in Nipomo and firefighters were able to quickly get it under control. Other fires were sparked in California Valley and east of Paso Robles.

The 3-2 Fire burned steep hillsides near the intersection of Sunrise Ridge and Santa Rita Creek Road. No structures were lost, according to news reports.

The Whale Fire burned rangelands and oak forests near Old Creek Road and Santa Rita Creek Road. As a result, Old Creek Road was closed to traffic.

According to a Cal Fire report, the Whale Fire started at 10:40 a.m. Saturday, July 15 and while the cause is officially "under investigation," dry lightning was the likely cause.

"Access to the fire has been difficult for fire equipment," reads the Cal Fire report dated July 16. "Firefighters face high temperatures and steep terrain, as they establish control lines. Mop-up and mitigating tree hazards around the perimeter will be a priority today."

No structures were destroyed and no injuries were reported and the blaze was in mop-up stages by Wednesday.

Last week's heat wave that pushed temperatures into triple digits for several days in a row, also trapped a tremendous amount of smoke. As the wind stilled, the heat climbed and the smoke thickened, hanging mostly high in the air on the much cooler Coast, but pushing all the way to the ground just a few miles inland.

Even without the threat of Coronavirus, it would have been wise to wear a mask against the smoke.

Petra Clayton of Los Osos and her husband were driving Old Creek Road Saturday before it was closed, witnessing the fire in its infancy.

"We happened to be driving on Old Creek Road towards Whale Rock Reservoir at about 11 a.m.," she told EBN, "when we saw some smoke. Turning into Cottontail Creek Road we ran into concerned area residents."

On their way back, the avid videographer filmed for a few minutes the fire out the car window.

"On our return trip back out on Old Creek Road I captured some of the blaze." That footage can be viewed on her Flickr account (see: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jack-petra-clayton/50231552462/>)

Cal Fire said they used five fire engines, three water trucks and four hand crews — 85 total firefighters — to fight the Whale Fire.

County Gets Grant for Under-Age Drinking



At a time when worries about teenagers getting their hands on vaping products has led to all-out bans on those products, the County is still concerned about under-aged drinking.

County Supervisors accepted \$200,000 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Act grant program over the next four years — April 30, 2020 to April 29, 2024, according to a county staff report.

The grants are intended to "prevent and reduce alcohol use among youth and young adults ages 12 through 20 throughout the county." The extra money will expand the County Behavior Health Department's "Friday Night Live," program from six to eight middle schools.

The report, from Behavioral Health Administrator Anne Robin, said, "The activities to be implemented in the project will aim to address community norms regarding alcohol use by youth, reduce opportunities for underage drinking by limiting youth access to alcohol, create changes in underage drinking enforcement efforts, address penalties for underage use, and/or reduce the prevalence of negative consequences associated with underage drinking [e.g., motor vehicle crashes, sexual assaults]. In addition, the department will build on strategic plans that were developed under its federal Drug Free Communities Grant, and County's Strategic Prevention Framework plan. STOP Act grant funds must be used primarily to support infrastructure development, such as creating policies, workforce development, partnerships, etc."

The Prevention & Outreach Division Program will use the money to:

- Enhance intergovernmental cooperation and coordination on the issue of alcohol use among youth.
- Serve as a catalyst for increased citizen participation

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News

and greater collaboration among all sectors and organizations of a community to foster a long-term commitment to reducing alcohol use among youth.

- Strengthen collaboration among communities, the federal government, state, local, and tribal governments to reduce alcohol use among youth and young adults.
- Disseminate timely information to communities regarding state-of-the-art practices and initiatives that have proven to be effective in preventing and reducing alcohol use among youth.
- Develop an Action Plan that enhances local community initiatives for preventing and reducing alcohol use among youth. Implement strategies and needed actions identified in the Action Plan.
- Utilize Town Halls to gain feedback from communities on underage drinking issues in the community and utilize this feedback to implement change.
- Work with the Prevention Technology Transfer Centers (PTTC), regional technical assistance firms responsible

for distributing strategies and providing training, to ensure best practices are shared between the PTTC and your program to expand the reach of messaging regarding best practice strategies to address underage drinking.

According to the report, Friday Night Live started up here in 1993 and "provides the County with resources, volunteers, and advisory support for school-based programs across the county. The County Office of Education, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Cuesta College, Public Health Department, Probation, local law enforcement agencies, and the Department of Social Services each have distinct partnership roles in assisting Behavioral Health in its mission regarding underage drinking prevention."

County COVID-19 Cases Drop, Climbs Again

By Neil Farrell

San Luis Obispo County Public Health officials announced that a 21st person has died from COVID-19 but, on the other hand, the daily number of new cases dropped to single digits last week for the first time in months.

The County had been reporting new cases ranging from 70 to 123, (the latter including 79 inmates from California Men's Colony) until last Wednesday, when the count was just eight new cases.

That was the lowest number reported since March when the Coronavirus Pandemic was declared a "public health emergency," by the Governor. The County Health Department adopted the declaration and guidelines and in turn local city councils followed suit.

But the good news didn't last, as by Friday, the new daily count was over 50 new cases reported the day before.

Residents have been under shelter-at-home orders and local businesses have either been shutdown entirely or as now, open with limited capacity, since March 20.

Latest Statistics

As of Aug. 25, the County reported there had been a total of 2769 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in SLO County since April 1.

Of that, 3206 people had recovered from the virus; there are 441 active cases; and the additional death brought the county's total up to 21.

That 21st death was also the first person under-30 to die of the virus here. However, just like all the others, that person, who died in hospital in Santa Barbara had health problems too.

Just 12 people were in the hospital being treated for COVID out of 369 total available hospital beds. Five patients were in intensive care units, of which there are 53 available beds.

Of the 21 deaths, 15 were people over 85-years old, including one person who was 100. Three people from 65-84 have died; and two, ages 50-64. One person from 30-

49 has died and there have been one death among people under 30.

There've been no deaths among infants to 18-years old. So far, no one under-18 has been hospitalized.

According to the County's report as of Aug.25: Morro Bay has had 39 COVID-19 cases; Los Osos 50; Cayucos 13; Cambria 31; and San Simeon six.

Paso Robles leads the County with 704 cases, with San Luis Obispo second at 339.

To date, 158 people have been hospitalized, with 33 being admitted to ICU. (See: <https://www.emergencyslo.org/en/positive-case-details.aspx> for more detailed stats.)

A Mistaken Death

A few weeks ago the County removed one person from the COVID death list. The mix-up had the County Health Officer vowing to look into all the deaths, in case they missed something.

"We looked further into all reported COVID-19 related deaths," Dr. Penny Borenstein said, "because it became known that the circumstances of at least one case was not as clear as the others. This pandemic is ever-evolving, and we will continue to refine our information as we learn more."

The "reclassified" case, the County said, was a resident at Vineyard Hills Health Center, a nursing home in Templeton that had an outbreak of COVID-19 among residents and staff. That person was already in the final stages of dying when the County found out he or she had COVID-19, and so the virus may have been present but it didn't kill them.

The incident has the County doing a bit of mea culpa. "Consistent with national standards, the County Public Health Department will continue to classify a known COVID-19 case as a COVID-19 death only if COVID-19 is listed on a death certificate as an underlying cause of death.

"In deaths where it is unclear if COVID-19 may have contributed to that person's demise, those cases will not be listed as a COVID-19 death."

County Worries About CMC

While COVID cases at the County Jail have seemingly dried up, the local state prison is a hot spot and the County Health Department has now joined the California Men's Colony's COVID management team to try and stop the outbreak.

As of Aug.25, the County reported that CMC had over 239 inmates test positive and a dozen staff members also had the virus.

As of Aug. 11, The County had tested some 140 staff members.

The prison is able to quarantine sick inmates and staff with the virus are being sent home to recover.

County health officials said the prison "is successfully isolating and quarantining inmates with symptoms or who have tested positive and is providing the necessary care to help slow the spread."

Though it might be good for free citizens to shelter-at-home, the same can't be said for the incarcerated inside CMC, where social distancing is not easy.

"A communicable disease outbreak in a prison setting poses a hazard to inmates, employees, and the community at large," Dr. Borenstein said, "and we are coordinating with all of our local and state partners to ensure that CMC has the support and guidance it needs to control the spread. Correctional, shared or group settings have their own unique challenges for controlling the spread of COVID-19, and our Public Health team is working closely with CMC to take necessary actions and prevention measures."

The warden's happy for the help. "CMC is proud to be working alongside County of San Luis Obispo Public Health in ensuring the safety of the staff and inmates at our Institution," said CMC Warden Josie Gastelo.

Colleges Could Open

Reopening plans by local colleges are being reviewed and if approved, Cuesta College and Cal Poly could be allowed to open up their campuses for students to attend in-person classes.

On Aug. 12, the County Health Department announced that Dr. Borenstein had reviewed reopening plans for "higher education institutions" which would be Cal

Poly and Cuesta College.

"We support the safe reopening of our higher education institutions as we all try to slow the spread of COVID-19 here in SLO County," Dr. Borenstein said. "As our colleges and universities continue to develop their re-opening strategies in accordance with the State's guidance, protecting the community and promoting behaviors that reduce spread of the disease must be the top priority."

The State Health Department on Aug. 7 issued guidelines for colleges to open for classes and athletics, though Cal Poly had announced that it won't play football this fall.

The guidelines follow pretty much what's been recommended all along.

"As modifications to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission are implemented for in-person instruction, adequate preparedness, testing, and training are necessary steps to ensure the safety of students and staff," the County said. "Key modifications include wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distancing, as well as closing nonessential shared spaces [game rooms, lounges], limiting visitors, providing individual grab-and-go or plated meals, prioritizing single room occupancy [except family housing], and COVID-19 prevention training for students and staff."

Other universities across the nation that opened for classes have seen spikes in COVID cases, attributed mostly to off-campus parties and gatherings, which a university has little control over.

Third Deputy Tests Positive

A third Sheriff's patrol deputy test positive for COVID-19, the Sheriff's Office announced Aug. 19.

The deputy reportedly developed symptoms on Aug. 17, according to a news release, and was tested that day. The test results came back positive 2-days later.

"The Deputy was not in contact with the public," said Sheriff's spokesman Tony Cipolla. "The Deputy is based at the Sheriff's main headquarters and was wearing a mask while on duty, so it's not believed there was any workplace exposure." The Deputy is now recovering at home.

The Sheriff's Department had had a total of six staff members test positive — three correctional deputies at the jails and three patrol deputies. However, in the County Jail, "there have not been any new cases of COVID-19 in inmates in over four weeks," Cipolla said. "The total number of inmates who have tested positive remains at four."

For updates on COVID-19 in SLO County, see: ReadySLO.org or call (805) 788-2903. A phone assistance center is available at (805) 543-2444 Mondays-Fridays, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Police Arrest Fraud Suspects



Steven Josef Banfi



Danielle Raquel Quijada

Morro Bay Police arrested a pair of suspected identity thieves on various theft and fraud charges as well as illegal possession of firearms.

According to a news release at 12:24 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 12 police were sent to Motel 6 on Atascadero Road for a report of a man in a silver Mercedes in the parking lot holding a rifle.

Officers found the suspect vehicle when they arrived and connected it to a man and woman from San Francisco. The man was on probation, with a clause authorizing a

Fraud Continued on page 9

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Police Blotter



Morro Bay Police Logs

- **Aug. 16:** Police responded at 8:19 p.m. to a disturbance in the 100 block of Sienna. A 25-year-old woman was arrested for resisting arrest and of course being moellered in public.
- **Aug. 16:** A disturbed fellow was raising a ruckus at 3 p.m. in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd. A 54-year-old scofflaw had a felony and a bench warrant and was in possession of "intoxicating inhalants." He's got the sniffles in County Jail now.
- **Aug. 16:** Police responded at 1:36 p.m. to Front and Harbor where a parked car jumped in front of a skateboarding hooligan.
- **Aug. 16:** It was a rough morning for one local yokel, 42, as at 9:17 a.m. he was stopped by police in the 200 block of Dunes and cited and released for suspicion of possessing drug paraphernalia. Then at 12:41 p.m. in the 900 block of Piney Way, the same zhlub was nicked for the same charge, as he'd apparently had more than one hookah. This time he got booked, and was no doubt released immediately on no bail.
- **Aug. 16:** At 6:24 a.m. police contacted an apparent night owl, 35, who was arrested for suspicion of being high on illegal stimulants. He got to jail in time for breakfast.
- **Aug. 15:** Police contacted another suspicious subject at 9:09 p.m. in Lila Keiser Park. The 28-year-old snot waffle was cited and released for alleged possession of suspected drugs.
- **Aug. 15:** Yet another citizen of the year was nicked for being high on drugs, this time at 5 p.m. in the 500 block of Atascadero Rd., anyone sensing a pattern here?
- **Aug. 15:** Police responded at 12:41 p.m. to the Sinclair Gas Station in the 900 block of MBB, where they'd found another credit card skimmer insidiously installed on one of their pumps.
- **Aug. 15:** Police contacted a 60-year-old woman in the 400 block of Trinidad who had two warrants. She was cited and released with no doubt her future, third warrant.
- **Aug. 14:** Two cars went boom at 9 p.m. in the 1200 block of Embarcadero. No gruesome details were released.
- **Aug. 14:** Police were called at 4:45 p.m. to Dutchman's Landing in the 700 block of Embarcadero, where a man was roaming around screaming and harassing the decent folks out shopping. Police arrested the 20-year-old anti-christ for suspicion of resisting arrest and battery. He had apparently also vandalized a cash register at a restaurant in the 900 block of Embarcadero about 15 minutes earlier. He chilled in the cooler.
- **Aug. 14:** Police towed an offensive vehicle from the 300 block of Panay for expired tags, no doubt a death sentence for that car.
- **Aug. 13:** Police responded to a disturbance at 3:17 p.m.

- to the 400 block of Bernardo and arrested a 26-year-old fellow for suspicion of making terrorist threats.
- **Aug. 13:** Police responded at 11:30 a.m. to a reported case of larceny at Coast Electronics in the 500 block of Quintana. A 37-year-old sticky-fingered woman was cited and released for suspicion of petty theft.
- **Aug. 13:** The warrant squad caught up to some real desperados at 8:33 a.m. in the 400 block of Quintana. A 46-year-old fellow was cited for bench warrants and a 24-year-old woman was cited for suspicion of possessing methamphetamine.
- **Aug. 12:** Multiple victims told police of money being fraudulently debited from their credit cards by scumbag skimmers.
- **Aug. 12:** Police responded at 3:34 a.m. to a domestic dustup in the first block of State Park Road. Logs indicated a 32-year-old louse was arrested for suspicion of spousal abuse and was checked into the County B&B, considerably worse accommodations than the Inn at Morro Bay.
- **Aug. 11:** Police took a petty theft report in the 2700 block of Greenwood and a task force will no doubt be formed.
- **Aug. 11:** Police at 4:43 p.m. contacted a man in City Park who was being a fooliot. The 58-year-old fellow was arrested for allegedly being UTI on stimulants.
- **Aug. 10:** At 8:15 p.m. police contacted a 51-year-old man in Lila Keiser Park whom they arrested for suspicion of being waxed on drugs.
- **Aug. 10:** Police responded to the 300 block of Quintana where someone had burgled a unit at Storage Depot.
- **Aug. 10:** At 1 p.m. police recovered a reported stolen car in the 500 block of Atascadero Rd., but several no doubt valuable items had been kept by the thief.
- **Aug. 10:** Police responded to the 400 block of LaJolla for a report of credit card fraud.
- **Aug. 10:** Police responded at 10 a.m. to a domestic dispute in the 800 block of Ridgeway. Police determined it was a disputed divorce and no doubt left immediately.
- **Aug. 9:** At 11:44 a.m. police contacted a suspicious man in the 400 block of Tahiti. The model citizen, 36, was arrested for suspicion of being schwacked on illegal stimulants and was injected into the County hole.
- **Aug. 9:** Police responded at 9 a.m. to a disturbance in the 900 block of Piney Way. According to logs, a 39-year-old woman was arrested for suspicion of threatening a police officer, making unreasonable noise (a.k.a. "raising Caine"), trespassing and being fit-shaded in public, which explains a lot. The apparent bounder was bound in shackles and tossed in the hoosegow to sleep it off. It was her second arrest in so many days, as at 11 a.m. Aug. 7, she got nicked on Morro Bay Boulevard for being on the warpath.
- **Aug. 8:** Police reported the identification of the person who vandalized the side of Foster Freeze, and the 22-year-

- old graffidiot is in trouble now.
- **Aug. 8:** Police stopped a suspicious driver at noon on Hwy 41 near Main. Logs indicated the 34-year-old driver was allegedly in possession of more than 28 grams (1 oz.) of jazz cabbage, and also got ticketed for failing to wear his seatbelt, winning this year's first Bonehead of the Week Award.
- **Aug. 8:** A woman in the 1200 block of Embarcadero told police that her wallet was stolen, but then found it the next day, and no doubt in the last place she looked, too.
- **Aug. 7:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 10:47 a.m. at Main and Atascadero Road. Logs indicated the fellow was nipped in the bud for being smacked on drugs.
- **Aug. 6:** A citizen in the 100 block of Island told police he or she was defrauded in a grand theft.
- **Aug. 6:** Police were contacted by Adult Protective Services regarding a suspected sinful case of elder abuse by a son against his father in the 2800 block of Ironwood.
- **Aug. 6:** At 1:49 p.m. someone found drugs and paraphernalia apparently just lying about in Lila Keiser Park. Police took the weapons of mass destruction to destroy.
- **Aug. 6:** Police responded at 4 a.m. to a domestic dispute in the 500 block of Main. Logs indicated a man and woman, who have kids together, were in an apparent row. Police gave the fellow a ride to the bus station in SLO where he'll apparently appear on a stage — the next one out of town.
- **Aug. 5:** Some petty thief committed petty theft at a business in the 500 block of Quintana.
- **Aug. 5:** Police responded to a disturbance at 11:51 a.m. in the 600 block of Quintana. According to logs, a 62-year-old woman was arrested for suspicion of spousal or cohabitant abuse. She was swept off to the iron bar motel.
- **Aug. 4:** Police responded at 12:40 p.m. to an assault report in the 700 block of Market. Logs indicated a 36-year-old woman was nicked for suspicion of inflicting corporal injury to a spouse or cohabitant, and that hellcat too went into the cage.
- **Aug. 4:** Police responded to a disturbance at 9:19 a.m. in the 1100 block of Monterey. Logs indicated a 20-year-old woman was arrested for three counts of suspicion of child endangerment.
- **Aug. 3:** Police responded to a liquor store in the 300 block of Morro Bay Blvd. where some sneaky thief stole hooch.
- **Aug. 3:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 4:18 p.m. in the 400 block of Embarcadero. A 48-year-old woman was arrested for suspicion of driving on a toot.
- **Aug. 3:** A woman in the 800 block of Main told police her purse had apparently grown legs and run off.
- **Aug. 3:** A citizen in the 300 block of Embarcadero told police that some scalawag stole the license off his boat trailer, in this week's example of why we need SWAT.

Fraud From page 7
search of his person, vehicle or domicile.
"During a search of the silver Mercedes," police said, "officers located brass knuckles, a replica rifle, multiple credit cards with names not belonging to the suspects, numerous associated receipts, and associated stolen property; and cash totaling \$2,950 were discovered inside of the vehicle. Based on the stolen receipts recovered, \$11,888.96 in losses are determined."
The suspects, Steven Josef Banfi, 32 and Danielle Raquel Quijada, 28 both of San Francisco were arrested and charged with suspicion of Penal Code 530.5(A) — use of another's personal identification

cards to obtain credit cards for theft (I.D. theft); PC 496(A) — receiving/concealing stolen property greater than \$950 (grand theft); and PC 530.5(c)(3) — possession of personal identity of more than 10 people
Both were booked into the San Luis Obispo County Jail but didn't stay long. "Both suspects were released within 24 hours because of the San Luis Obispo County Superior Court updated Emergency Bail Schedule, presumption of zero dollars bail," police said.
The investigation is ongoing and anyone who has information regarding this incident is asked to contact the Morro Bay Police Department (805) 772-6225 or Crime Stoppers at (805) 549-STOP.

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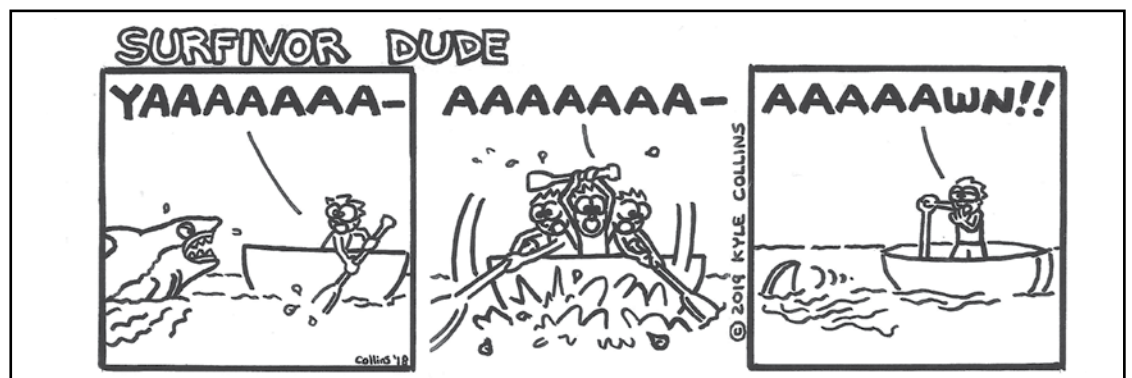
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Movement on Cayucos Vet's Hall Repairs

By Neil Farrell



The historic Cayucos Vet's Hall has been closed to the public since May 2016 due to structural problems, but after more than 4 years, there could be good news coming from the County in September. Photo by Neil Farrell

The historic Cayucos Vet's Hall has been closed for years due to structural problems and largely unusable. However, thanks to some ingenuity by the County, who installed a large tent in the picnic area behind the hall, it was able to continue to host some signature events like the Sea Glass Festival and 4th of July Bingo and benefit BBQ.

It wasn't perfect but it was better than nothing. And then the State government's response to the coronavirus pandemic hit in March like a freight train, and whatever use the community was getting of the Vet's Hall abruptly stopped.

The Vet's Hall, which most people would agree, is the heart of the beachside community, was closed by the County in May 2016 after an inspection found that the building was not structurally sound and its continued use by the public for everything from public meetings, to weddings and civic celebrations, was not safe.

The main issues were a rotted out floor and foundation under the hall's stage that actually cantilevers over the beach, and the connections between the walls the high-pitched roof were rotted away too. The outdoor deck adjacent to the Cayucos Pier was rotten and eventually removed. Pretty much the whole back portion of the building will have to be replaced as well.

After a couple of years, the Cayucos Art Association, which has a gallery inside the Vet's Hall, was allowed to reopen after engineers determined that its small portion of the building was safe to use. But again, the coronavirus reared its ugly, spiky head.

Now, the Vet's Hall isn't being used much at all due to the State's orders that shut down large gatherings in such venues, along with bars, concert halls, and even football

stadiums in an effort to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Now with the entire hall essentially unusable until the public health emergency is over, the Lions Club, which manages the hall for the County, is getting some help with expenses.

County Supervisors agreed to help the Cayucos Lions Club cover the cost of utilities at the Vet's Hall. It's just the fourth amendment to a decades old contract between the County and Lions Club.

According to a staff report by County Real Property Manager, Phil D'Acri, the County has been managing the Vets Hall for the State of California since 1944 and contracted with the Cayucos Lions Club in 1984 to have the Lions take over management of the Vet's Hall, the Cayucos Pier and Pier Plaza, "for the purpose of a public meeting place and community hall."

The County and State Parks reached a new agreement in 1999 "to provide for recreational development, operation, control and Maintenance of State Park properties known as Morro Bay State Park Golf Course, Pecho Road in Montaña De Oro State Park, Bishop's Peak, and Cayucos State Beach, including the Cayucos Veterans' Memorial Building, which, upon its execution, canceled and terminated the 1944 Agreement," D'Acri said.

The County, which ordered even the tent closed, has now agreed to pay some of the monthly bills. "The County has an obligation to the State for the operation of the Cayucos Veterans Hall and has agreed to contribute up to \$500 a month, or the actual monthly expenditures, whichever is less, during the period of Aug. 1, 2020 through Oct. 31, 2020 to offset the minimum utility services for the Lion's

Club," D'Acri's report said.

Money for the roughly \$1,500 total costs is being taken out of the Dist. 2 Supervisor Bruce Gibson's "Project Grants" allocation.

That might be fine and dandy, but residents want to know when it's going to be fixed? D'Acri told Estero Bay News that there could soon be really good news.

The County has been working diligently though mostly behind the scenes to get the building repaired, which is complicated by the historic nature of the Vet's Hall.

It was originally the Cass Landing Warehouse built in the 1870s by Capt. James Cass. Capt. Cass, who also built the iconic pier and Cass House as his personal residence, developed Cayucos as a seaport, shipping local agricultural goods.

Putting the building to rights will be expensive. At last estimate, the County was looking at a project for over \$5 million to bring the building up to modern safety standards, while preserving the historic look.

In 2019, the County sought two large grants for the project and landed one of them, a \$1.9 million award from the California Natural Resources Agency, back in October 2019.

"The project is one of 21 projects statewide to receive funding under the Agency's Cultural, Community and Natural Resources grant program funded by Proposition 68," according to the County's Cayucos Vets Hall webpage (see: <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/Public-Works/Current-Public-Works-Projects/Cayucos-Vets-Hall-Restoration>). "The purpose of the grant program is to protect, restore, and enhance California's cultural, community and natural resources."

Last February the County found out that its second grant application, for the Statewide Park Development and Community Revitalization Prop 68 grant program, was not successful. But D'Acri said there could soon be good news on the project.

He acknowledged that they still have a "gap in funding," but also said there would be something further on this coming to Supervisors in September. It should be noted that all the preliminary work — from engineering and designs of the repairs, to permitting — is already completed. All they need is funding.

County Supervisors have spent quite a lot of money already. According to a project chronology, in March 2017 Supervisors created the Cayucos Veterans Hall Rehabilitation Project, setting up a fund within the County budget.

It authorized \$236,000 to jumpstart the project and hired Studio Design Group Architects, Inc., at \$96,000 for "Phase I-Schematic Design and Design Development of architectural and engineering services."

In December 2018 Supervisors approved another \$200,000 to pay for construction documents; and in May 2019, Supervisors put in another \$161,000 into Studio Design Group's contract "to expand the scope of services to include Phase II-Construction Documents and Phase III-Construction Administration."

Predicted completion of the repairs and reopening of the Vet's Hall is expected to now be sometime in 2022.



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Community

Celebrating Recovery during COVID-19



SLO Behavioral Health Drug and Alcohol Services honors graduates with virtual ceremony.

SLO Behavioral Health Drug and Alcohol Services recently celebrated recovery during the 32nd Adult Drug Court Graduation.

The Drug & Alcohol Services Division offers a variety of services and programs to help people who struggle with drug and alcohol addiction, including public walk-in clinics, outpatient treatment, and court-mandated programs. The Adult Drug Court program provides treatment options for local community members who are experiencing substance use issues and have had recent involvement with the legal justice system.

Graduation is a special honorary time where counselors celebrate the hard work clients have put into maintaining their recovery. During the graduation, many clients courageously share stories of their journey to sobriety and acknowledge family, friends, and the community for helping them get through difficult times.

This month's ceremony is especially triumphant as graduates successfully completed their treatment amid COVID-19, a time of unique challenges including increased stress levels, disrupted routines, isolation, and new remote treatment sessions.

"We have eleven clients that have rocked their recovery all the way through this pandemic. They were looking forward to participating in our traditional graduation, so the team has decided to move them along to the next phase of their life via Zoom," says Clark Guest, Drug and Alcohol Services Program Supervisor.

SLO Behavioral Health began offering remote clients services in March when the shelter at home order went into effect across California. These services enabled clients to continue their treatment programs virtually allowing clients to stay on track and sober during the pandemic. The department has encouraged clients to take advantage of local and national recovery networks to ensure no one is alone in their recovery journey.

Information about virtual recovery resources during COVID-19 is available online at www.slobehavioralhealth.org. Local residents can learn more about enrolling in SLO Behavioral Drug and Alcohol Services by calling 1-800-838-1381.

YouTube Star Pulled From the Sea

By Neil Farrell

The ocean off Pt. Buchon proved to be a great adventure for an Internet fishing-blogger when his kayak overturned and pitched him into the sea, nearly taking his life.

Morro Bay Harbor Patrol Reserve, Dax Theis, said they were notified by the Coast Guard of a vessel in distress somewhere off Point Buchon, off Montaña de Oro State Park at 9:23 a.m. Friday, July 31.

"It was an 'unknown' type of vessel in distress," Theis said. After coordinating with the Coast Guard, which had a 47-foot motor lifeboat already outside the harbor doing training, Chief Harbor Patrol Officer Becka Kelly and another reserve officer, Stella Nicademus, got underway in a patrol boat and Theis said he suited up and set out on one

of the department's Kawasaki jet ski water rescue vehicles. A firefighter from Morro Bay set out on their other Kawasaki, Theis said.

Cal Fire Sta. 15 in Los Osos, along with a San Luis Ambulance crew, responded by land.

When he arrived on scene, which was off Corallina Cove, Theis said he only knew that it was an overturned kayak with one, possibly two, people in the water.

"I was first on scene," Theis said. "All I could see was debris in the water — an ice chest, bag of bait — that was about it. I thought the boat had sank."

Theis said he began a pattern search through the area and soon found an overturned kayak that was painted camouflage, which made it more difficult to see in the water.

"I found the patient in the water clinging to the kayak," Theis said. They were about a half-mile offshore. "I pulled him onto our rescue ski."

Theis said he transported the man to the patrol boat, where Nicademus, who has EMT training, did an initial assessment and began trying to warm him up with blankets.

Theis said, "He was very cold and had been in the water for a while."

The patrol boat took the victim to Spooner's Cove and he was transferred back onto the rescue ski and driven up onto the beach, where the fire and ambulance paramedics took over.

He was reportedly suffering from hypothermia, seasickness, and had swallowed seawater. The man was wearing a yellow, inflatable life preserver, which undoubtedly save his life. And while the ocean off Montaña de Oro is known to be shark infested, the man avoided any toothy entanglements.

Theis said he retrieved the kayak and the debris in the water and took it to the Coast Guard boat, and they took it all back to Morro Bay.

Seas were "moderate" Theis said, with 15-20 foot swells.

They later found out that they'd rescued a famous fisherman. According to a report in the City Manager's August Newsletter, their victim, "was a famous Chinese Kayak Fisherman who didn't speak English and was producing a YouTube fishing show."

Theis acknowledged he and his victim definitely had "a language barrier."

The next day, the man's father came to the Harbor Office to thank everyone and retrieve his son's gear. That was when they learned of his Internet fame.

But the day's excitement for Theis wasn't over. "That same day Reserve HPO Theis's wife had her water break and the two of them made it to the hospital to welcome a new baby girl, Auzora Theis, to the world!" the newsletter reported.

More Road Repair Jobs for Local Contractor

By Neil Farrell

A Morro Bay contractor has continued his hot streak landing another pair of repair jobs on County roads that were damaged in storms.

David Crye General Engineering Contractor, Inc., of

Morro Bay was awarded a \$447,000 contract Aug. 11 to make repairs on Santa Rosa Creek Road, Turri Road and Prefumo Canyon Road, repairing slip outs of the roadways that happened over 3-years ago.

"The heavy rains and flash flooding that occurred in San Luis Obispo County as a result of the severe winter storms in [January] 2017," reads a staff report by Rachel Naccarati, the County's project manager, "caused streams and drainage ditches to overtop their banks resulting in extreme water runoff, which damaged the County's secondary roads and drainage systems. This resulted in embankment and roadway collapse which compromised the function and safety of the road."

A total of nine County roads were damaged back then, and because the County is paying for the repairs through the Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA, it's taken this long to get them ready.

"FEMA has now completed the National Environmental Policy Act review for the projects, as well as consultations with State Historic Preservation Office, National Marine Fisheries Service, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service," Naccarati said.

Crye Engineering, at \$447,000, was the lowest of six bidders and actually came in some \$13,000 under the County's engineering estimate of \$460,000. And the other bids weren't even close.

The other bidders were: Whitaker Construction Group, Inc., at \$533,000; John Madonna Const., \$588,000; Raminha Construction, Inc., \$618,000; S. Chaves Const., \$691,000; and AAAA Engineering Contracting \$711,000.

Crye Engineering is able to bid so low at least in part because the owner, David Crye, also owns four local mines, so he can furnish the materials himself.

The damage on Santa Rita Creek Road was at milepost .8, just east of Main Street in Cambria. On Turri Road the damage was at MP 2.5 east of South Bay Boulevard, and on Prefumo Canyon, the damage is at MP 3.5 north of See Canyon Road.

At that same Aug. 11 meeting, Crye Engineering also got a \$154,000 contract to repair another slip out on Prefumo Canyon Road near milepost 4.9. This damage happened in March 2018.

According to a report by Brian Uder, the County's project manager for this job,

"A large tree had fallen resulting in embankment erosion and undermining of Prefumo Canyon Road which compromised the function and safety of the road. The unstable slope continued to erode, further undermining the road, and has resulted in narrowing down to a single lane of traffic. Temporary slope stabilization measures were implemented by the County as an interim measure.

"This project will repair the roadway and associated embankment that is damaged and will re-establish the facility to pre-erosion conditions."

This job had to get permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the Regional Water Quality Control Board. The County is paying for this job out of its roads budget and will get reimbursed by FEMA, according to Uder's report.

This job also had a lot of bidders: AAAA Engi-

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Community



Morro Bay Clam Taxi

While visiting Morro Rock recently, I was in awe of the public turnout at the beach of probably 100 to 200 people — many were families enjoying the day. My brother and I counted more than 20 surfers in the water surfing the waves at low tide.

All of it reminded me of the fun time I had with the Thursday Painters, when we (about 10 of us) boarded the Clam Taxi and motored over to the dunes, where we set up our art equipment and went to work painting the coast from a new vantage point. We worked until lunchtime and enjoyed sharing the experience at the same time.

When it was time to leave for home around 4 o'clock, we stood between two posts that were placed there for returning visitors to the dunes. Back then, whenever the Clam Taxi was available, tourists and visitors alike could board the small craft and head out for a new experience.

According to a Los Angeles Times article by John McKinny, 1988, "A walk along Morro Bay's sandspit offers an opportunity to explore one of the very special environments of California's Central Coast. The sandspit trail follows the sand dunes and ridges that separate Morro Bay on the inland side and Estero Bay on the ocean side. Atop some of the higher dunes (about 80 feet above sea level) you will be treated to good vistas of the bay, Morro Rock and nearby mountains. Heather, salt grass and coyote bush are among the hardy plants surviving in the harsh, wind-lashed environment of the 3-mile-long sandspit. Silvery lupine, sea rocket and evening primrose add some seasonal color. Bird watchers may spot the snowy plover, which lays its eggs in the sand. On the muddy flats of the spit's bay side, willets, curlews and sandpipers feed."

neering bid \$190,000; John Madonna Const., was at \$203,000; R, Burke Const., \$209,000; Whitaker Const., \$220,000; Seamair Const., \$223,000; Chaves Const., \$223,000; and Raminha Const., was at \$248,000.

The County's estimate was \$262,000. "The low bid came in 41% below the engineer's estimate," said Uder.

In an EBN story July 30, Crye said,

"Having the rock pits and the business, we're pretty tough to beat." He has his own fleet of gravel trucks too. "We keep it all in-house for the most part."

So while having a local contractor land these jobs is a big plus for the local economy, having the bids actually come in under the estimates is almost unheard of, and certainly a good deal for taxpayers, who after all, ultimately pay for everything.

On the Job — Support Our Community

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Our On the Job series continues. Estero Bay News encourages people to support the community as well as shop local. Stop by area businesses and tell them we sent you.

Be sure to check businesses for hours

of operation and social distancing practices, as things change rather rapidly.

Send your photos on the job with a brief description and who's who to Editor@Estero-BayNews



Stop by and get your caffeine fix at Morro Bay Coffee Co., 948 Morro Bay Blvd. Meagan Clapp is part of the crew serving up coffee and espresso drinks, pastries and made-to-order breakfast and lunch menu items. They are open Mon. – Sat. from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. and on Sun. from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m.



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'Taming the Restless Mind' Virtual Art Show



"Taming the Restless Mind" is the virtual show running September 5 – 27 at Cambria Center for the Arts Gallery.

The exhibit "Taming the Restless Mind," at Cambria Center for the Arts Gallery, brings works of abstraction September 5 – 27.

Artist Deborah Pepin works with pastels, oils and cold wax to create what she calls her doodles. These large-scale, floral-inspired works are unique and thought provoking with dynamic angles and bold color.

Marvin Sosna, still an artist at 93, will exhibit his abstract expressionistic paintings. He follows a method of layering line and pattern allowing his paintings to emerge through thought and impulse, judgment and reflection, and a critical eye until the work is complete.

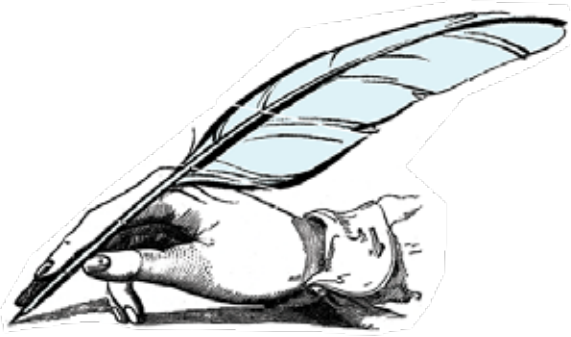
This exhibit is in the virtual gallery and all folks are invited all to participate in both the exhibit and the opening reception.

Information:
 Online take-in: August 29 – September 2. Entry fees are \$10 per piece for CCA members and \$25 per piece for non-members.

Virtual Opening Reception: September 5th, 4:30 p.m.

For more information, including links to participate, go to <http://cambriacenterforthearts.org/>.

Letters To The Editor



Water Worries Call for New Voices

The article about Morro Bay Desalination ["City Gives Up On Desalination" Vol. 2, Issue 16] was very informative, revealing problems heretofore unknown by the residents. The video that accompanies it online was even more revealing.

The video illustrates the recycled water will only be injected in the ground when it is needed to supplement the groundwater to thwart seawater intrusion. That most or all of the costly reverse osmosis filtered and UV treated recyclable water from the WRF will in essence be dumped! This dumped water was supposed to fulfill the EPA "new water" requirement as represented by the city in order to qualify for the \$69 million WIFIA [Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act] loan.

The video also belies the popular story the City Council promoted to garner resident support for large rate increases necessary to fund the now \$130 million Water Recycling Facility (WRF) that would make Morro Bay's water future secure by providing potable water from a million gallons of wastewater a day.

We now also learned the City has an agreement with CMC to get emergency Whale Rock water.

So it seems even more viable that a new sewer plant, located next to the Cayucos Toro Creek treatment plant, could make recycled water that would go directly to Whale Rock reservoir for storage.

The article exposes the poor decisions made for the present bankrupting Sewer/Indirect Potable Reuse fantasy that this and the previous city council relentlessly pursued to the exclusion of any other voices.

Let's fix this: vote Weiss for mayor and Winholtz and Sadowsky for council!

*Nancy Bast
Morro Bay*

Thanks for the Space

Thank you to Neil Farrell for giving such generous coverage to the recent live-streaming fundraiser/concert that benefited the local grassroots nonprofit food delivery program known as Bags of Love ["Online Concert Benefits Food Program," Vol. 2, Issue 16].

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As you know, this event was the culmination of collaboration between Bobby de Lancelotti (founder of Estero Bay Kindness Foundation), Katie de Lancelotti (Bobby's daughter and creative support), Paul Irving (owner and marketing director of Big Big SLO Marketing Services), the SLO County Stumblers (the entertainment), and my wife Jude and me (the sponsors). I suspect that your article in Estero Bay News helped us increase the total number of "hits" that the event attracted.

According to Paul Irving, we got 1,100 views on Facebook, and more than 2,100 views on Paul's website. Earlier this week, according to Bobby and Paul, more than \$12,000 in donations had already been received, but more contributions were expected after-the-fact.

We will keep you posted on the final calculated "grand total" whenever the books are closed. But we are all grateful for the positive publicity you tossed in our direction. From my vantage point as a relative newcomer to the Central Coast, I want you to know that I very much appreciate your willingness to get the word out on this event, and the obvious interest on your part and on the part of Estero Bay News in publicizing programs that are designed to help those in need in our local communities during these troubled times.

*Dan Clement
Los Osos*

Police Blotter isn't Funny

Besides your unfunny police blotter, the most recent article on the illegal marijuana grow ["Sheriff Busts Big Pot Gardens," Vol. 2, Issue 16] and subsequent arrests referred to this amazing healing plant as "the evil weed."

Such characterizations are outdated and harmful to the population at large. I respectfully request you refrain from editorializing and inserting your apparent prejudice in a widely distributed local publication.

*Genevieve Holloway,
Morro Bay*

Against Morro Bay's Measure E-20

I think the idea of raising the sales tax 1% is wrong just before an election if it doesn't have any money for repairs to our local network of streets in Morro Bay. I live near the Morro Bay State Park and Morro Bay Golf Course. There are two streets unpaved on Kings Avenue and Ridgeway Street going towards the western boundary of Morro Bay State Park, since our city repaved the northern and western section of this road about 7 years ago.

I know during an COVID-19 emergency that this money can be used for police, fire and emergency response, but, to me, I can't afford it at this time as a "consumer" tax because it is not going towards repairing our streets in our city of Morro Bay. I think it could be put to better use if it was spent without wasting money that the city doesn't have.

*Scott C. Presnal
Morro Bay*

Drop Felony Charges Against Tianna

The San Luis Obispo County Democratic Party (SLOCDP) is deeply disturbed by the San Luis Obispo Police Department's recommended charges against Black Lives Matter activist Tianna Arata. We call on District Attorney Dan Dow to drop the unwarranted, heavy-handed felony charges against her, and look to the San Luis Obispo City Council to publicly address the incident directly, as well as to implement corrective action to reverse the political weaponization of the city's police department.

Our County Sheriff Ian Parkinson's inflammatory words -- which prompted the civil activism of our friends and neighbors -- and the injection of incendiary commentary by our District Attorney during a First Amendment-protected gathering, violate our democratic principles, divide our community, and corrupt the rule of law. SLOCDP condemns attempts to use our legal system to stifle free speech and further partisan political agendas. Instead of escalating tensions, SLOCDP demands fair, just, and equitable treatment for all people by our Sheriff and District Attorney, as well as by the various chiefs of police

throughout our county, and calls on all elected officials in our county to provide the robust oversight, which will guarantee it.

SLOCDP declares that weapons of war have no place in our community, especially military grade chemical weapons such as those used on protesters during a peaceful demonstration on June 1, 2020. Because the possession of such weapons is unnecessary and dangerous, and their use contributes to our county becoming known nationally as a place where law enforcement tramples on the 1st amendment, they must be renounced and abandoned.

SLOCDP will continue to challenge and work to dismantle the structures that generate enduring racial, economic, political, and social inequity. We will promote racial justice through fair, just, and equitable governing of all public-serving institutions and in the formation of public policy. We condemn the disproportionate prosecution of Black, indigenous, and people of color, evidence of institutional racism. We will continue to push for societal transformation, to make it clear that black lives matter and that there is no place for racism in our country and in our county.

*John Alan Commerley
San Luis Obispo County Democratic Party*

Letter to Supervisor Gibson

First, I would like to acknowledge that homelessness in a city, town, and/or community is complicated and difficult to address -- thoughtfully. That being said, the homeless encampment behind (west of) the Los Osos library parking area has been there for months, and it is growing. So is the homeless population along Palisades Avenue, and around the Los Osos Library and Community Center.

There are, of course, a number of problematic issues that are becoming increasingly more evident, such as toiletting (sanitation); the accumulation of trash in and around the library; and signs of drug usage. I have contacted the Sheriff's department on several occasions and have been informed there is a resource officer, but apparently there is not much the Sheriff can do.

It is apparent this issue is not simply going to go resolve itself. I am writing to ask how the County of San Luis Obispo plans to address this growing issue.

*Watson Gooch
Los Osos*

Gibson's Response

Watson, thanks for you note, and I understand the concern. In the interest of getting you a prompt response, please allow me to paste a response I sent earlier to another concerned citizen. I'm sure there will be a larger community conversation on this in coming weeks. I'll be happy to talk with you more about it in the future.

Indeed we have heard from several people -- expressing both concern and a desire to help out -- about the encampment and vehicle parking near the library.

We are certainly aware of the concerns that are raised by the fact people are living under these conditions: Fire danger is near the top of the list, along with public health and environmental impacts to both the public right of way and the Mid-Town land parcel, and other public safety issues that have been addressed by the Sheriff's Office.

We have reached to relevant staff in various departments for their assessment of the current situation and ideas for mitigating it.

Specifically, we have contacted the local fire authorities who confirm their concern for the fire threat. They feel that there are more serious problems in the Salinas River bed and Oceano, but we all understand that the fire threat is real. That public safety issue will be an important part of efforts to move campers off Mid-Town in a manner that is acceptable under Martin v. Boise.

The Sheriff's Office has stepped up patrols to deter criminal behavior and the Sheriff's Community Action Team (CAT) is aware of the situation and working to connect people with services and a path to permanent housing. The challenge of finding an alternative site to live remains. The CAT deputy also reports that most of the people staying near the library have been in Los Osos for some time (many parking in other neighborhoods in the community) and he has had previous contact with them. His most recent report suggests some progress in getting folks to accept services.

Please know that Los Osos is not alone in facing the issue of homeless encampments. I am trying to leverage the fact that this is a countywide problem to bring more resources to bear here. I'm seeing some interest in this: the Homeless Services Oversight Council is forming a working group under their Encampments Subcommittee to look at solutions. I've contacted our budget office to explain the problem and see if we direct/redirect funds toward programs that can address this.

Obituaries

Sidney Catharine Willson-Young 1955-2020



Longtime Los Osos resident Sidney Catharine Willson-Young, 65, died peacefully July 21, 2020 at home in Paso Robles, Calif. surrounded by the love of her four children.

Born in the City of Orange on April 17, 1955, she was raised in the Southern California beach town, Corona Del Mar.

She valiantly battled breast cancer for 10 years.

Sidney is survived by her four children, all of whom grew up in Los Osos: Amanda Rose Young Canter, 38, of Atascadero; Rebecca June Young Price, 36, AKA "Bek", of Paso Robles; Janice Margaret Young, 33, of San Francisco; and John Forest Willson Beardwood, 25, of Santa Cruz. Also surviving are Sidney's brother, Edward "Ned" Willson, 60, of Los Osos; and nephew Jesse Willson, 40, and niece Roseanne Willson-Ilar, 38, both of Aptos. Also surviving are John "Jack" Beardwood, 66, of Los Osos, father of Sidney's son and stepfather to the girls; and many more who she loved dearly.

Ms. Willson Young, AKA "Sid," was preceded in death by her parents, Murton Hitchcock Willson, Jr. and Dr. Margaret Harwood Thayer "Marge" Willson; and older brother Geoff. She was also preceded in death by Donald Leroy Young, who was her former husband and father to her daughters.

She always put her loved ones' needs before her own. She gave her life to her children, making their childhood nothing less than magical.

Sidney had an encyclopedic knowledge of traditional American music and many of its offshoots. She also had the gift for musical composition. She performed for 25 years with Three Sheets to the Wind, a group dedicated to the sounds of the sea, and The Belles of Los Osos, an ensemble of four women who all penned their own originals.

She also studied the traditional music of several cultures, including the hymns of the Christian Church. She

sang for many years in the St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Morro Bay. Willson-Young was also active in promoting Episcopal youth camps.

She earned a Bachelor's of Arts degree in visual and performing arts from UC San Marcos and an Associate of Arts in early childhood education at Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo. She was also actively involved in Orff Schulwerk, a developmental approach used in music education. It combines music, movement, drama, and speech into lessons that are tailored to a child's natural world of play.

In addition to parenting, for several years she worked as a court reporter in Los Angeles County, Orange County, Santa Barbara County and San Luis Obispo County. She also operated a day care facility in her Los Osos residence and was instrumental in the creation of the National Resonant Guitar Company.

In lieu of flowers, etc. donations can be made in her name to Harmony Project. This wonderful organization provides high quality music instruction and social support to children year-round at no cost. For more information: www.harmony-project.org/donate#donate-form

Due to the pandemic, it is not possible to have a Celebration of Life that she deserves. Once things start to get back to normal, there will be a gathering with family, friends, food and live music.

Just after she transitioned, her four children sat in the patio and watched a magnificent sunset together and witnessed Sidney grasp the tail of the comet Neowise, which carried her into the cosmos.

I realize that many will be frustrated with the time it will take to mitigate this problem. The constraints of Martin v. Boise are real — as you know, we can't simply move people off these public spaces unless we have a place for them to go. The cost of providing such a place is daunting in our current financial situation, as that facility must be managed to accomplish the objective and protect health and safety. No one wants to hear that from their government, but this is our current reality. I am advocating on this and I know others have similar concerns.

In the meantime, we will address the health and safety issues as we're able in the short term. We obviously need to get campers out of the brush, so that is a top priority. We will be talking about how toilets and showers (properly managed) fit into the public health impacts. I appreciate the compassion of those who are working to provide food and other support to those living in such difficult circumstances.

Please know that both Blake [Fixler, legislative assistant - District Two] and I are working on this. I think there is an effort to convene a virtual town hall through LOCAC that can discuss these issues further.

Bruce Gibson
Supervisor, District 2

International Hit

I was so pleased just now to discover that the Estero Bay News is publishing some stories online. I must say that the content of the story on the Morro Bay water supply is "interesting" ["City Gives Up On Desalination" Vol. 2. Issue 16] I keep hoping with every election that a Council majority of honest people will be elected. Maybe this time... I have been living in France now for 3 years, but still keep up with the goings-on in my former home.

Linda Stedjee
La Rochelle, France

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

Taking it to the Streets

By Jill Turnbow



The outdoor deck at Pacific Hair in Cambria. Photo submitted

Many Cambria businesses have had to look for creative ways to keep work flowing during the current pandemic. Small businesses are struggling to maintain customers and to keep their doors open, so to speak. So when the county once again shut down personal grooming salons, two local businesses threw their shops to the curb — literally.

Pacific Hair at 780 Arlington recently constructed an outdoor deck behind their salon and can continue offering basic services.

"We went through the flood of '94," owner Ingrid Turrey said. "In that crisis, you could just clean up and carry on. But this, this is different. And it's been difficult. But I think now it is working out really well. We can't do everything, we're limited on any type of chemical treatments, but we can still give great haircuts."

Pacific Hair was closed for more than three months during the initial lockdown, but when given the greenlight by the county, they resumed operations with fewer workstations, spaced apart, and followed protocols to insure their customer's safety. Three weeks later, they were shut down once more when the county landed on the State watch list. Turrey then decided on the outdoor deck.

"Many of our customers were uncomfortable the first time we opened, not wanting to be inside, but now that we are outdoors a lot of people feel better about coming back," she said. They have only two stations on the deck, so the six stylists are rotating shifts and the salon can be open seven days a week. "We are so grateful for our customer's patience and understanding. They know we put their health and safety first," Turrey added.

Down the street at 1071 Main, Cambria's newest busi-

In Memory of Barbara A. Heyer 1938-2020



Barbara (Barb) Heyer passed away in her home in Los Osos, CA on July 25, 2020 after an incredibly courageous and stalwart battle with cancer. She was 82-years-old.

Barbara was born on January 27, 1938 in Los Angeles, CA. She is survived by her husband of 39 years, Charles Eugene (Gene) Heyer, originally of Eagle Rock, CA. They spent their years happily together in San Diego, Escondido, and for the past 10 years Los Osos.

Barbara was an exceptional seamstress, her favorite hobby for over 60 years. She was an avid reader, loved travel, wine tasting and studying the Bible throughout her lifetime.

She will be greatly missed by her large circle of friends, family, community and church members. She leaves behind her adult children, a son Bob in San Diego, and daughter Linda in Newport Beach. She also leaves behind two granddaughters, Paige Henderson and Mol-

ly Brooks. Given the COVID-19 climate, no plans for a memorial service have been made at this time. However, in her memory, the family is considering a posting on Forever-Missed.com in the near future.

Donations can be made in Barbara's name to Cayucos Community Church, Samaritans Purse, Salvation Army or the American Cancer Society.

ness, Astro Barbershop, has brought two chairs onto their front patio area and continue to provide haircuts six days a week. The business opened only a few weeks before the lockdown when they were forced to close. Once given the opportunity to operate outside they took advantage of it.

"It may have seemed strange to try and open a new business right before a pandemic, but we re-opened at a time when everyone needed a haircut," owner Peri Rae Horner said. Business has been good and steady. "We are making a lot of people happy."

Horner's business partner, Jordan Sagovia, came across the location in the middle of town and thought it was perfect for a barbershop. Peri believes he was right and is happy they made the decision, despite the current situation. They are following all the mandated protocols, keeping their customers safe. Masks are required. Currently they are only doing haircuts as the mandate does not allow any contact with facial hair. However, as soon as they lift the mandate, that will change. "I specialize in shaves and beard trims and look forward to that," said Horner.

Appointments are required for both locations. For an appointment at Pacific Hair, call 805-927-3301 or call the new Astro Barbershop at 805-395-1005.



Jordan Sagovia gives a haircut to a customer outside Astro Barbershop. Photo submitted



Drivers on Main Street in Morro Bay are alerted to the closure of State Park Road.

want to create a traffic pattern.”

Possibly of news to locals, the cut-through on State Park Road is not any shorter.

“We’ve even looked at that holistically,” Falat said. “What’s the fastest route to get to the center of Morro Bay? Surprisingly enough, it is actually faster to go around then cut through the park.”

State Parks, the County, County Public Health and the City of Morro Bay meet routinely to discuss the situation. The opening of the entire park is still on the table.

“Right now we are closed, through September 15, and we will reevaluate that as we have throughout this entire incident.” Falat said. “The good thing is that we’ve allowed portions of it to be open. That was one consideration early on. There are needs and uses for the residents as well as the visitors that are here, and I think, collectively between all agencies that are in the recreational business, we’ve done a good job of balancing that whole thing.”

Throughout 2019, the 135 campsites and two group camp areas in Morro Bay State Park were booked 116,857 times.

Election From page 1

former Councilwoman Betty Winholtz; former Planning Commissioner, retired mechanical engineer, and community activist, Richard Sadowski; and Laurel Barton, who lists herself as a “retired local administrator and grant writer.”

In Los Osos, the Community Services District had three seats open and all three incumbents will retain their seats, after no one stepped up to challenge them.

According to LOCSD General Manager, Ron Munds, Troy Gatchell and Marshal Ochylski will each retain their seats for 4-year terms and Christine Womack will retain her seat for another two years.

Womack is only getting a 2-year term after she was embroiled in a huge election mistake by the County Clerk in 2018. Womack, who had been appointed to finish out the term of a previous director who resigned, was supposed to run for a full 4-year term in 2018. But due to an admitted screw-up by the County Clerk-Recorder, Tommy Gong, she was listed on the ballot for a 2-year term, and she won election to what was essentially a seat/term that didn’t exist.

Gong didn’t realize his mistake until it was pointed out to him and by then it was too late for the election. So he was forced to throw out the results of her election and told the CSD board it could appoint someone to the seat, but they had to face election again in 2020.

Womack was appointed to that term and now, when she could have faced a challenge will win in a walkover. But she will have to run again in 2022, in what would then be a full 4-year term. That would then put the CSD board back on its correct election schedule.

Munds said he and the clerk-recorder straightened out the 2018 election mess when he was hired last year.

“When I came onboard about a year ago,” Munds said, “I met with Tommy Gong to try to clear things up. Long story short, in order to be consistent with the District’s formation documents, which are explicit on terms for the different director seats, Christine’s needs to be a 2-year term and will be back on schedule to be a 4-year term from

then on. I had to take an item to the Board to rescind a Resolution from I believe 2018 to get things back on schedule.”

And because there were no contested seats this time, the LOCSD election will not even appear on the Nov. 3 ballot.

It’s not quite the same scenario in the Cayucos Sanitary District, as three people will vie for two seats. Appearing on the ballot are incumbents Bob Enns and Hannah Millar, facing off with challenger John Paul “J.P.” Drayer, who is listed as an educator and business owner.

The San Simeon CSD is in the same boat as Los Osos, with two people signed up for two, 4-year seats — Owen Kellas and Will Carson both incumbents will get full terms, and Bill Maurer, an appointed incumbent, will get a 2-year term on the SSCSD. This too will not appear on the ballot.

In the Cambria CSD race, four people are vying for two seats. Appearing on the ballot will be incumbents Harry Farmer and David Pierson, being challenged by retired journalist Tom Gray, and community volunteer Karen Dean.

In Cayucos, two incumbents of the Cayucos Elementary School District will return, as no one challenged Val Wright or Susan Brownell for their seats.

As for the San Luis Coastal Unified School District, incumbent trustee Chris Ungar was unopposed and will get another term in Trustee Area No. 2 (Los Osos).

In the District’s Trustee Area No. 1 (Avila) there are three people vying for two seats, with incumbents Walt Millar and Kathryn Rogers being challenged by retired teacher, Eve Dobler-Drew.

In the Coast Unified School District, appointed incumbent, Jack Mettier was unopposed and will get an intentional walk into a new 2-year term.

In the other race, incumbents Samuel Shalhoub, Gary Stephenson and Tiffany Silva will each get a walk and will not appear on the ballot either.

In the SLO County Community College District (Cuesta College), independent consultant, Danna Stroud was unopposed in Trustee Area No. 1 (Paso Robles) and so will get a new term and will not appear on the ballot.

In Trustee Area 2 (Los Osos), community college instructor, Debra Stakes, was also unopposed and wins a seat. But there will be a contest in Trustee Area 5 (Atascadero), as incumbent Mary Strobridge is being challenge by professor, Brian Kennelly.

And two seats on the County Board of Education, no one challenged Area No. 1 Trustee, Diane Ward nor Area 3 Trustee, Joel Peterson, so both win re-election and neither will appear on the ballot.

Of note, there are no County Supervisors on the ballot, as incumbents won re-election in the March Primary Election. There will however be a change on the Board of Supervisors after Dist. 3 Supervisor Adam Hill died a couple of weeks ago.

Gov. Gavin Newsome will be called upon to name a replacement for Hill, who won re-election in the March Primary and would have started another 4-year term in December.

Vacation Rentals From page 1

issue,” Collins said. “Several town hall meetings were held and the Planning Commission reviewed different options for a new STR ordinance in May 2018.”

Work on the general plan update hit some snags and last fall the City Council ordered the VR ordinance moved to the front of the line. The City formed another committee with citizens from the business community and local residents.

Collins said the goal was to strike “a balance between several important considerations including neighborhood character, economics, and community safety.”

Starting in October 2019 through February 2020, the committee met 12 times, Collins said, and a council subcommittee of Mayor John Headding and Councilwoman Marlys McPherson joined them. Collins and Community Development Director Scot Graham served as committee staff.

The committee did extensive outreach and study of

VR ordinances in other cities, as well as ordinances that have already been approved by the Coastal Commission, which will also ultimately have jurisdiction over Morro Bay’s law.

What was proposed to the planning commission last week included:

- Limiting the number of VR licenses in residential zones to 250, with no new applications being accepted until the number drops below 250;

- Permits are first-come, first-served and dependent on the density of VRs in that neighborhood;

- Applicants that don’t qualify because of density get put onto a waiting list;

- No more than 12.5% (one-eighth of the total) of the units in an apartment or condo complex can be VRs and apartment complexes of less than eight units can’t have more than one VR;

- VRs in residential zones must be separated by no fewer than three lots, and none of those lots can be VRs; and they can’t sit back-to-back with other VRs;

- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs or granny units) cannot be used as VRs and no VRs allowed in mobile home parks;

- VRs must collect the City’s transient occupancy taxes (10% of a night’s stay) and the tourism business improvement district charges (3% in M.B. and 1% for the county-wide Tourism Marketing District), paying a minimum of \$500 a year in TOT to the City.

The detailed ordinance goes into other areas such as security, responsibility and regular inspections, among others.

The Planning Commission, which continued its discussions until the second meeting in September or possibly October, did reach consensus on reducing the cap from 250 to 150, Community Development Director Graham told Estero Bay News.

“They also reached consensus on removing hosted vacation rentals from the cap entirely, which is part of their justification for reducing the cap number,” Graham said.

When the item comes back, Graham said they would have additional information “in the form of the number of existing hosted vacation rentals and related to buffers, requesting that we show examples of what 150-foot and 175-foot buffers look like. We gave them examples of 50’, 100’, 200’ and 250’.”

Public comments were mixed, with residents complaining about everything from excessive noise and parties to unattended dogs howling for their owners, and too many cars.

VR owners and management companies defended the practice as making second homes affordable until they can be turned into full time retirement homes, and touting the VR industry as a new and vital part of a town’s tourism offerings.

Amongst all this has been a lingering issue of illegal, bootlegged VRs, those that are not licensed and usually rented outside of the area through Internet sites. This raises a fundamental question, just how many VRs are operating in Morro Bay?

Seeking to figure that out and to optimize the collection of taxes, the City hired a consultant last year. “We signed on with ‘Host Compliance’ late in 2019,” said Collins. “They do online auditing of hosting platforms like Airbnb.”

“Based upon their initial report for Morro Bay, we have been able to stop illegal operators [those without vacation rental permits] through the issuance of written warnings and potentially a few citations.”

The City has been scrambling to keep public services up to par during the response to the coronavirus pandemic with much of the economy either shut down or severely limited; the City treasury has been bleeding red for several months. That’s forced layoffs at City Hall and affected most all of the City departments.

“Our enforcement efforts,” Collins said, “are in somewhat of a flux with all the other COVID-19 related compliance issues. But we continue to work with Host Compliance to address illegal operations at this time.”

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Kevin says,
“Look for the ANT on the Door”

KEVIN O'CONNOR, President

Morro Bay Recognizes "Face Mask Heroes"

Residents and Visitors Making a Difference to Keep Our Community Safe

Last month saw the launch of the Morro Bay "Face Mask Hero" campaign encouraging residents and visitors to wear face mask coverings in public places.

Wearing a mask demonstrates kindness, humility, and respect for others by helping to protect one another from COVID-19 and be part of the solution," City officials said. "We are happy to say that we are seeing an increase in the number of people wearing face coverings."



Members of the City's public safety staff have handed out stickers and buttons to those they see being heroes in

the community. They also provide masks to those who do not have them. Warnings have been issued, but the staff has found the Hero campaign to be more effective in achieving compliance.

"Over the past month we have handed out hundreds of buttons and stickers, to residents and visitor's alike," said Public Information Officer Jennifer Callaway. "Whether exercising, getting some fresh air, working or touring the



waterfront, people of all walks of life are demonstrating they are Face Mask Heroes, making a difference in our community to help stop the spread.

"The campaign has been a great way for our public safety personnel to positively interact with members of our community and visitors; it is a true reflection of the kind of community policing that is provided here in Morro

Papagallo From page 1



Courtney Meznarich and Ken McGavin look on as Len Gentieu serves the buffet on the Papagallo II.

"COVID came out of the blue," said Gentieu. "In March we had \$12,000 in deposits that we suddenly had to return. Our business is down 89%. Now with social distancing and all the precautions we need to take to make our folks comfortable, we only allow 36-maximum on board, usually less."

After four more cancellations in early August the question is how could they survive 2020? Gentieu's answer, "The same way we've gotten through so far! We are debt free! We've had it better than most."

Gentieu and the Papagallo II have rich lifetime stories. In the eighth grade he was the only male to join Chef's Club. Classmates called him a sissy, but he loved cooking. During high school, he started working in restaurants washing dishes. Once his father gave him permission to follow his dream as a career cook, Gentieu discovered he was good at it. He graduated with honors from the Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, New York, and has enjoyed cooking for two three-star generals, owned and operated five restaurants and served as executive chef or in management positions for country clubs and resorts.

He then converted his dream of yacht ownership into a thriving retirement business utilizing his vast career training in worldwide cuisine preparation and his innate talent for creating memorable experiences onboard the Papagallo II.

Gentieu's yacht had several names while serving numerous owners. She was built in 1964 by the Burger Boat Company for the president of Admiral Shipping Lines. Her first cruise was on Lake Michigan, but then she spent time in Florida before heading west in 1974.

Gentieu prominently displays her "guest flags" through the Panama Canal, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico. Finally, her current namesake, Ercole "Hercules"

Gabiati purchased her after he successfully built his business, Gallo Salami Inc., in San Francisco. He renamed her after his nickname Pappa Gallo. Gentieu decided to let her keep her name. It's a great legacy story, after all, they both launched careers in the food industry.

When Governor Newsom opened California for business again, they were cautious. "July 4th we purposefully kept it at 22," Gentieu said. "Those onboard were so joyful to be out on the water. They'd been cooped up so long, and the bay offered fresh air and wind in your hair. We booked some parties since the demand was there. We still have insurance and dock fees that come due every month."

Gentieu called in his marketing consultant, Jeanette Trompeter to put plans in motion. "We're ready to launch a new concept for smaller parties - six, eight, ten or twelve guests for a 5-course gourmet dinner," he said. "People say they want to feel like they are on vacation."

Trompeter, a retired KSBY-TV anchor who started consulting through Ruby Shoes Wine Club and Excursions, said, "It's been an interesting time. When COVID hit I lost two of my largest clients, but I'm finding there's a niche helping businesses see that there are still opportunities. I think Len and Midge are going to be busy with this new model. Smaller parties are more work to ensure safety, but I think people are willing to pay a little more to have more private experiences and excursions."

And if sheltering at home and reading an entertaining autobiography that includes many of Gentieu's recipes why not pick up a copy of his book "Chasing the Heat: 50 Years and a Million Meals." Better yet put on your mask, go down to the dock between GAFCO and Harbor Hut and, if the galley door is open, Gentieu is in his "man cave," the Papagallo II. He'll even autograph his book and probably tell you a great story about a life lived extremely well.



bay. We look forward to meeting new Heroes every day."

For more information, contact Jennifer Callaway at 805-772-6217.

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