

Bike Park Gets New Lease

By Neil Farrell



A young mountain biker gets some air in this photo taken in January 2016 at the grand opening of the Morro Bay Bike Park. The City just signed a new 5-year lease to keep the park open through August 2025.

Morro Bay's off-road bike park will continue to operate for another 5 years, after the City signed a new lease with the property owner.

The City Council on Nov. 10 approved extending the bike park lease with Pacific Gas & Electric, which owns the bike park property on Main Street. The deal also includes the non-profit group, "Central Coast Concerned Mountain Bikers, Inc.," which built the bike park and is responsible for its maintenance and operations.

In January 2015, the City and CCCMB entered into a Memorandum of Understanding or MOU for "the construction, maintenance and repair of a Bike Park," reads a staff report from the City Manager.

That October, the City wanted CCCMB to provide proof of consent from PG&E but was "unable to meet PG&E's insurance requirements; however, the City of Morro Bay's insurance policy was and is fully compliant with PG&E's requirements."

So the City signed the lease and CCCMB has in essence a sublease that expired this past Aug. 31. CCCMB is required to pay PG&E's rent of \$500 a year and produce a "work plan" which lays out the intended use of the property.

"The MOU between the City and CCCMB," City Manager

er Scott Collins wrote, "requires that group be responsible for all aspects of the PG&E agreement except indemnification and insurance."

The bike park's new lease expires Aug. 31, 2025 and the rent is still \$500 a year, which CCCMB is responsible for but the City will pay should that group not be able to.

Construction on the Bike Park started in late 2015 after more than 2 years of work through the red tape and fundraising. The bike park was spearheaded by Bonnie Johnson, the City's support services manager at the police department.

At the time, Johnson had children that were avid bike riders including a daredevil daughter that competed in downhill mountain bike racing. Johnson said she remembered years before when there was a small dirt track at the old Flippo's Skate Harbor, a long-closed roller skating rink on Atascadero Road.

Though tiny and not very exciting, the little dirt track was well used and popular. It was a place for families to come together, she said.

The Morro Bay Bike Park was designed and constructed by Alex Fowler of Action Sports Construction of Santa Cruz who has built dirt tracks around the world including tracks for X Games and the Olympics.

New Lease Continued on page 14

County Finishing Up Los Osos Community Plan

By Neil Farrell

County Supervisors took their first look at the Los Osos Community Plan, an all-encompassing set of documents that will guide all aspects of Los Osos's future — development, habitat conservation, and resource planning — and of course there is controversy over the plans regarding growth and water.

"The Community Plan," reads a Dec. 15 County report, "and related amendments will put in place the goals, policies, programs, standards, and zoning needed to guide future land use, transportation, and development for sustainable growth in the community over the next 20 years."

The "Los Osos Community Plan," and the "Los Osos Habitat Conservation Plan," are key segments of the Estero Area Plan, covering Los Osos, Cayucos and rural Morro Bay, which the County has been working to update for nearly 30 years. Due to the sewer controversy and more, Los Osos was separated out from the rest of the Estero Area Plan around 2003. The rest of the area, Cayucos and rural Morro Bay, had their portions of the plan approved in 2004.

Supervisors also were asked to certify an environmental impact report on the plan(s) including the Habitat Conservation Plan. It was a mouthful of documents interconnected in their scope and authority, and all subject to approval of the Coastal Commission.

And with all the myriad of potential issues, with the biggest of all time the sewer solved, the main concern of citizens and water purveyors was future growth, and how and when it would be allowed.

The three water companies in town — the Community Services District, Golden State Water, and S&T Mutual — are all under a 2015 court judgment that called for them to develop a "Basin Plan" for managing the groundwater to protect it from seawater intrusion. Groundwater is the town's sole source of drinking water, and the wells are extremely deep, as much as 800 feet down, into the lower aquifer. An upper aquifer separated by a clay layer deep underground, is where the town's septic systems discharged into for roughly six decades. And it too is being considered for future supply.

With most production wells located on the western side of the community, seawater intrusion has been documented far inland, nearly to the Los Osos Library at its worst, leaving the town to essentially be under a water moratorium after solving its sewer moratorium that started in 1988.

In letters to the County, all three water companies urged that the water plan coordinate with their efforts.

The CSD's General manager Ron Munds noted the 2015 Stipulated Judgment and the work all three have done to address it. "The results have been encouraging," Munds' letter said, "but the CSD is recommending that a very cautious and measured ap-

Community Plan Continued on page 14

County Hires Diablo Decommissioning Manager

By Neil Farrell

It's arguably the biggest future issue on San Luis Obispo County's horizon, and now the decommissioning of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant officially has someone to manage the mountain of red tape to come.

County Supervisors approved hiring Susan Strachan to serve as the "Nuclear Power Plant Decommissioning Manager" for the County Planning and Building Department.

Planning and Building Director Trevor Keith's staff report from the Supervisor's Dec. 8 meeting filled a position created by Supervisors at their Nov. 17 meeting. Strachan was scheduled to start work Dec. 14.

Strachan's position was created as an "at-will" employee meaning she has an employment contract as opposed to being under Civil Service. She's got a lot of planning experience in government and the private sector.

"Ms. Strachan has over 22-years of professional level planning experience," Keith's staff report said, "including 3-years of experience with Yolo County, and 19-years of experience as an owner of her own consulting company including serving as the principal consultant, managing the environmental permitting and construction compliance for utility scale energy projects and industrial facilities, including nuclear decommissioning, natural gas fired power plants, renewable power plants, transmission lines, and pipelines.

"As the decommissioning of the Diablo Nuclear Power Plant is an extremely important process for our County," Keith said, "the need for someone who has Ms. Strachan's unique experience is ideal."

Strachan has a bachelor's degree in political science from U.C. Santa Barbara, according to Keith's report. She starts her job at the top salary level, \$140,000 a year — \$67.31 an hour, \$11,667 a month — plus benefits that raise her annual compensation to

Diablo Continued on page 14

Covid-19 - Laurie Niblock, Ocean Avenue Travel - Adjusting to Life at Home

By Judy Salamacha

It is no secret the world's travel industry has been economically devastated. According to the U.S. Travel Association "...since March, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in \$481 billion in cumulative losses for the United States travel economy..." and "...50% of jobs lost is projected by year's end." This one industry's continued losses equals \$61.8 billion in federal, state and local tax revenues.

Laurie Niblock did not close Ocean Avenue Travel in 2019 anticipating a world pandemic. She fully intended to travel during her retirement years. Her Cayucos-based business operated from 1991 to 2019, but she started her tenure in the industry before she left Hanover, Germany in 1959.

"I'm a travel agent who loves to travel," said Niblock. "I'm healthy and at the age when I can travel, but I can't go anywhere." She was forced to cancel a trip to Germany and she missed a family 60-year anniversary celebration in Texas.

Her back-up plan to supplement her retirement income is operating a vacation rental since she remodeled a portion of her home with stunning Pacific Ocean cliff-side views. She appreciated her isolated overlook was the perfect get-away to experience an authentic Central California beach town with pier-centered activities. And although Niblock has saved for potential rainy days and responsibly protects herself and her visitors from this infectious virus by filtering her booking space at least 24 hours before and after each visitor, she, like so many in the industry, are facing March 2020 revenue impacts again.

Reflecting back it was 1959 Niblock decided to come to America. "I was 21 and wanted to see something different so I took a job as a nanny. In those days each country had a quota for immigration and Western Europeans were the preferred visitors."

She traveled to Manhasset, New York. "I took care of Little Chuckie, a menopause baby. His father was a dentist. He wanted to train me as his dental assistant, but I realized once I had served as household help, I'd always be considered hired help."

Laurie Hannelore Niblock had the self-confidence to know



Travel agent Laurie Niblock planned to see the world during retirement and got stuck home during the pandemic.

she was meant to achieve more. During the 1970s, she met friends who worked for Volkswagen. She secured a secretary position at the USA division headquartered in New Jersey.

"It was there I found "the love of my life," she said. "A friend wanted me to meet his brother-in-law. We went out on a Saturday and on Sunday we decided to get married. He was a flight instructor for the Navy and was later transferred to California." Within eight months he died of a heart condition. She then found herself alone in Seal Beach needing a job. "My mother back in Germany said it was a good thing it happened to me (not her other siblings) because I had the coping skills."

During the 1980s, Niblock partnered with another friend to own and operate Dimension Tours & Travel. She also earned her

Adjusting Continued on page 15

Police
Blotter
Page 8



Love is
Alive
Page 9

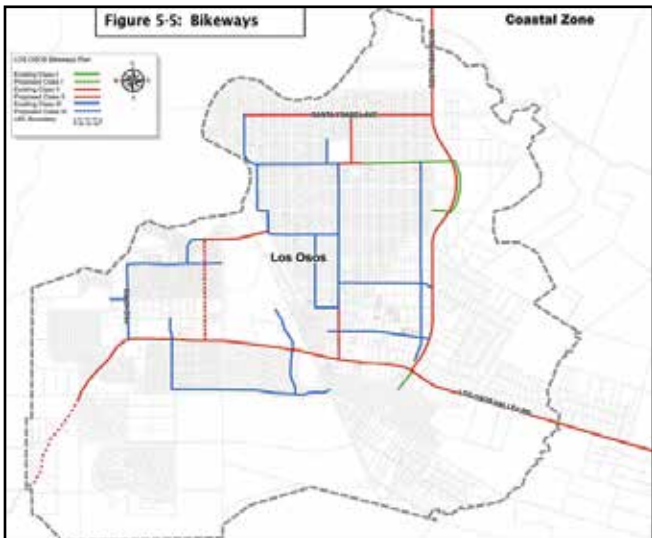


Light Up
The North
Coast
Page 12-13



Safety Part of the Community Plan

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



The bikeways diagram as shown in the Los Osos Community Plan Update.

Lack of sidewalks throughout most of Los Osos means pedestrians, bicyclists and cars share the same road causing concerns that safety should be a bigger part of the plan for future growth of the area.

Spearheaded by a resident's concern, the Los Osos Community Advisory Council voted unanimously to back a letter written by Jeff Krepps asking that the Board of Supervisors put more emphasis on pedestrian and bicycle safety in the proposed Los Osos Community Plan Update (LOCP).

"In my mind it is an important component to go forward with growth," said Krepps during the recent LOCAC meeting. "...Let's make sure we do that before there's new growth, so you're not extra impacting the safety on an existing community street. If the sidewalk is not practical, then maybe that new growth shouldn't go there because you're putting that one community in jeopardy."

The LOCP is on the Supervisor's Dec. 15 agenda, post press time.

In his letter Krepps said the issue with the Pedestrian and Active Transportation Plan is that there is no, "specified completion period nor any identified funding. The need for street safety has been an ongoing theme for the community and a critical element to the livability of our neighborhoods. Without proper plans in place in advance, new growth will further stress the safety of our streets."

Although Krepps' letter stated that the document's proposed plan should be put in place prior to new growth in the area, LOCAC opted to soften the language.

"We support a plan of this sort," said LOCAC member Sandra Sarrouf. "We support multi-modal travel, we want these issues looked at anytime new growth is happening. It's more of just raising the awareness — we want this, we want you guys to pay attention to this aspect of it — without saying it has to happen before new growth happens, but in conjunction with."

The Commission's recommended LOCP, as of early November, includes Class I "bicycle paths" that are completely separated from roadways and are sometimes in an exclusive corridor. "In Los Osos, these paths will also be designed for pedestrians. Class II "bicycle lanes" are found alongside vehicle lanes in the roadway,"

the report states. "Class III "bicycle routes" are used on low volume streets that are suitable for cyclists and are designated by signs only.

The County Bikeways Plan includes a network of community bikeways. Class II bicycle lanes are planned for two roads. Class III bicycle routes are located in several low volume local streets in order to encourage bicycles to use those streets as parallel routes to the major arterials and collectors in the community.

The Plan also identifies that sidewalks or other pedestrian paths be provided in new land divisions and with multi-family and commercial/office development.

"We are all for pedestrian safety and bicycle use especially on the side roads where there are kids that need to walk to school, there are people that are walking their dogs," said LOCAC Chair Tim Carstairs, "As we grow as a community we are going to want it to be as safe as possible."

Should the plan go through, funding for bike lanes and sidewalks is still an issue and in "very short" supply, District 2 Supervisor Bruce Gibson said during the meeting.

County Hires Facilities Consultant

By Neil Farrell

County Supervisors approved a \$1.02 million, 3-year contract with a consultant to go around and assess the condition of County owned facilities and come up with a plan and cost estimates to repair and maintain them.

County officials pulled from several funding sources to come up with the money for the contract with Cannon/Parkin, Inc. of Buffalo, NY, having to come up with \$487,900 this fiscal year for the contract.

Actually, the County Administration had come to the board with this item back in May 2020 but with the coronavirus pandemic response and the uncertainty of County finances, it was tabled and the staff told to bring it back at a later date. That time was Dec. 8, when the item returned to the Supervisors.

The County pulled \$62,616 out of the Parks Department reserves; \$263,993 out of Facilities Master Planning funds; and \$161,290 from the Building Replacement Reserves fund.

The "Facilities Condition Assessment" or FCA study will look at all County facilities, from the coastal access points in Cayucos, and other coastal communities, to County offices. The idea for such a study goes back to 2014 with "the objective of identifying and prioritizing deferred maintenance to support effective planning of necessary maintenance and capital projects," reads a staff report. The FCA was put on a 5-year cycle and is to be updated regularly, with the initial 5-year contract expiring in December 2019. Some 127 County facilities were included in that series of reports and, "Each report outlines specific repair recommendations for each building assessed."

The County uses data from the FCA studies to plan out maintenance projects in the annual County budget, and, "develop and forecast longer term replacement of major elements such as roofing and HVAC systems. In addition, the entire inventory of facility assets can be analyzed for the most efficient long-term investment strategy."

Cannon/Parkin's contract will include updating previous studies, adding new County facilities to the FCA, and "inventory and barcoding of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment assets," according to the report. "The County does not currently have a comprehensive and accurate inventory of building system assets."

The contract includes a 5-year subscription to FOScore™ software a "capital planning and management software tool. "Using a cost/benefit analysis called "Facility Condition Index" or FCI, the County rated the condition of every one of the 127

facilities in the initial studies.

Under the FCI scale, good conditioned buildings rated 0-5%; 6-10% was fair; 11-30 poor and anything above 31 considered critical. "The average assessed FCI for all 127 locations assessed was 11.06%," the County report said, "which means County buildings were in poor condition overall. Once all funded repairs are completed, the average FCI will be reduced to 8.3%, which will mean County buildings are in fair condition overall."

And, "The [Cannon/Parkin's] contract includes an assessment of County park facilities other than buildings, identified in the contract as 'park amenities.' These park amenities include features which require maintenance and repairs such as pools, playgrounds, sport courts, trails, campgrounds, boat docks, bridges, and other similar local amenities.

"The contract includes geolocating these amenities to assist in accurately tracking and forecasting associated deferred maintenance and costs."

In June 2019, the County went out for proposals to do the FCA study and got four companies expressing interest. A selection committee with people from County Parks and Recreation, Public Works and Central Services selected three to interview that August.

Though headquartered in Buffalo, Cannon/Parkin has an office in Los Angeles that will be doing the County's FCA. The company "received the highest scores from the selection committee based on completeness of submittal, understanding and approach to the project, professional qualifications, experience with similar projects, quality control, and response to interview questions."

The stepped up timeline — from a 5-year study to a 3-year one — will give the County a more accurate list of needed repairs and to plan for future repair projects.

Though some of the older County offices are in rough shape, it's the parks that have the most deferred maintenance projects. "The addition of the park amenities," reads the report, "will help the Parks and Recreation Department better quantify the current deferred maintenance needs for existing park and recreation amenities."

"This information will also allow the Parks and Recreation Department to prioritize and more effectively address ongoing facility maintenance needs to better deliver services to the public."

County Reports Smooth, Record Election

By Neil Farrell

The County Clerk-Recorder's Elections Office has closed the books on the November 2020 Presidential Election, entering one for the record books that despite a sea of change in how Californians casted their ballots, avoided issues that have thrown other states' elections into dispute.

"VBM [vote by mail] voting went exceedingly well," County Clerk-Recorder Tommy Gong told Estero Bay News. "We definitely had voters voting much earlier than ever before. [There

Estero Bay News Staff

Dean Sullivan

Owner - Publisher
dean@esterobaynews.com

Theresa-Marie Wilson

Editor
editor@esterobaynews.com

Neil Farrell

Reporter
neil@esterobaynews.com

Joan Sullivan

Jill Turnbow

Ruth Ann Angus

Judy Salamacha

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805.528.6011 or by snail mail at: P.O. Box 6192, Los Osos, CA 93412.



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were] No duplicate ballots sent, etc.”

Gong certified the election results on Nov. 25, taking the results to County Supervisors Dec. 15 for the official certification.

“The official canvass procedures include counting all vote-by-mail and provisional ballots turned in at the polls,” Gong explained in a news release, “balancing the number of voters who signed the voter service center rosters to the number of ballots cast, and completing a 1% manual tally to ensure the voting machines counted correctly.”

The California election saw a fundamental change in the voting as for the first time ever, all registered voters in the state were sent an absentee ballot, rather than the usual method wherein a voter must request in writing to have a ballot sent to their home address.

This was done ostensibly because the Governor’s coronavirus pandemic response still has a shelter-at-home mandate. Also, nearly half the election volunteer workers from the March Primary Election declined to participate in the November Election, which the Governor also changed into a 4-day voting period (Oct. 31-Nov. 3) instead of the traditional single election day.

The County also had nearly half of its March polling sites decline to participate in November due to fears of the virus. And many polling sites that remained, had to be changed to someplace large enough for social distancing among the voters.

In response, the County put out ballot drop boxes at various locations around the County, mainly County library branches.

“The 2020 Presidential General Election is one for the ages,” Gong said. “With unprecedented circumstances due to the coronavirus pandemic, all voters in California were sent vote by mail ballots and fundamental changes were made to precinct operations to maintain a safe voting environment across the state.

“Many other counties throughout the state suffered devastating wildfires and public safety power shutdowns. With much political unrest throughout the nation, this election was among the most divisive and the most closely watched in the modern election era. Yet counties, large and small, performed admirably despite the challenges they faced.”

Gong said his staff deserves credit for the smooth election. “I give all the credit to my staff members, fellow County departments for their assistance, consultants, and numerous election workers for making this election exceedingly successful.”

The election saw records set. There was a record-breaking number of registered voters — 184,050 — along with an record number of ballots cast — 162,615, the most votes ever in the County’s history.

The County also topped the all-time turnout percentage with 88.35%, breaking the previous record of 83.14% set in 2008 when ex-President Barack Obama was on the ballot.

That put San Luis Obispo County among the Top 5 California counties with for highest voting percentage. SLO was among the Top 12 counties in the 2012 and 2016 Presidential Elections, according to Gong.

The votes by mail also set records with 93.3% of people sending in ballots (152,741). Just 9,874 voted in person.

Gong reported no major hiccups happened such as computer crashes nor burst water pipes at the Government Center to interrupt the count, as occurred in other states.

And while there were some close races, including the race for Morro Bay Mayor, Gong said no one demanded a recount. The official results are posted online at: www.slovote.com.

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Women’s Honor Farm Donates



The Sheriff’s Office Women’s Honor Farm Sewing Program recently donated 111 handmade bags to the Department of Social Services for youth in foster care. The bags were filled with blankets and stockings made by inmates, as well as books, hygiene products, and stuffed animals.

“We’ve seen the ways making these items impacted the women of the Honor Farm Sewing Program, now we pass the joy to the Department of Social Services to see the impact they make for the families who receive them,” said Correctional Sergeant Lacey Silveira.

Cambria to Get 4x4 Ambulance

A specialized fire department ambulance will get new life and be added to the fleet of emergency vehicles in Cambria.

County Supervisors approved selling a 2005 Ford, 4x4, Type 1 Ambulance that had seen duty in California Valley as part of a special emergency medical volunteer team within County Fire.

The ambulance, code named “Rehab 42” or RHB42, had been out at Cal Fire Station 42, in remote Eastern SLO County. “It provided a climate-controlled environment to place a patient while awaiting an Emergency Medical Services [EMS] helicopter or ground ambulance,” said a staff report from Chief Josh Taylor of County Fire. “The original vehicle was called EMS 42, as it responded to mostly emergency medical calls by the EMS Platoon [Paid Call Firefighters] in California Valley.”

The platoon disbanded in 2011 and by 2014 the specialized ambulance was obsolete. The department decided to get a new truck instead of another four-wheeler ambulance, so it was declared surplus.

The Cambria Health Care District, which provides emergency medical services (an ambulance and paramedics), asked if the ambulance was for sale and the two agencies agreed on \$15,000. “Selling it to Cambria Community Healthcare District

would be a cooperative effort to fill their needs and continue to strengthen a good working relationship that County Fire has with the community.”

Literacy Tutors Needed

Literacy For Life has a San Luis Obispo countywide need for tutors. Work one-on-one with non-literate adults learning to read, write, and speak English. The Tutor Training Workshop will take place via Zoom on Saturday, January 23 and Saturday, January 30. If you are interested in attending the training but need help with using zoom, email assistant@literacyforlifeflo.org.

Tutors must attend both Zoom training sessions. Training sessions are free of charge. Both sessions will be from 10:00am to 12:30pm with a 10-minute break and the last half hour for questions. Additional training components are required and will be available as webinars to accommodate attendee’s independent participation.

For more information or to sign up, call 805-541-4219, or email assistant@literacyforlifeflo.org, or visit at www.literacyforlifeflo.org.

Three Positive Tests in County Jail

San Luis Obispo County Sheriff’s Department announced three County Jail inmates have tested positive for COVID-19, as the County tries to figure out where the illness came from.

The three inmates were all in the same cellblock and were tested Dec. 10. The tests came back positive that same day and the inmates were immediately quarantined.

“All three inmates have been isolated,” Sheriff’s spokesman Tony Cipolla said in a news release. “They are being treated at the jail and have not required hospitalization. The housing unit has been quarantined.”

Some 18 inmates and 14 staff members were to be tested after being exposed by the three.

“The source of the infection is being investigated,” Cipolla said, “and the Sheriff’s Office is working with County Public Health to determine the cause of this outbreak. This is the jail’s first outbreak since July.”

The County Health Department defines an “outbreak” as “three or more cases that are believed to be linked, Cipolla said. “With these recent cases, that brings the total number of inmates who have tested positive for COVID to 15. Seven of those have occurred since Dec. 2. This reflects the rising number of cases, which is being seen countywide.”

A total of 14 Sheriff’s deputies have tested positive for the virus — eight patrol deputies and six correctional deputies, Cipolla said.

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Peace on Earth

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Governor Orders More Lockdowns

By Neil Farrell

San Luis Obispo County took a major step backwards falling into the strictest tier of the Governor's coronavirus pandemic response and triggering another round of business closures and stay-at-home orders.

But County officials don't think the dire situation in Los Angeles and San Diego in terms of available ICU beds, should apply to the Tri-Counties — Ventura, Santa Barbara and SLO — who are seeking to be released from the "Southern California" Region in the Governor's latest system.

Governor Locks It Down

Gov. Gavin Newsome in response to rising numbers of cases and dropping numbers of available hospital beds to care for the sickest patients, split the State into five regions, and then ordered lockdowns almost everywhere, garnering for the first time some pushback from local officials.

"The Board of Supervisors," reads a Dec. 10 County Health Department news release, "from San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura counties issued a letter to state health officials and California Governor Gavin Newsom to request a separate Central Coast Region composed of the three counties. The letter requests that the Central Coast Region be allowed to exit the regional stay home order as a region after three weeks if the ICU capacity in the three counties exceeds 15 percent."

SLO Not Like L.A.

The Supervisors argue that our Tri-Counties area is nothing like L.A.

SLO County Board of Supervisors' Chairwoman, Lynn Compton said, "Our community members and businesses are being unfairly burdened because the State lumped us in with larger metropolitan areas that are geographically, demographically and functionally distinct from the Central Coast. The current region that the Governor has placed us in represents almost half of the State's population but we are a less-populated, suburban county that should not be categorized like the metropolitan areas.

"Reassigning our counties to a smaller Central Coast Region is a necessary step forward that will result in the best outcome for our local economy and our residents."

Kelly Long, chairwoman of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors, said, "The County of Ventura understands we must all work together to limit the spread of COVID-19; however, we should also consider a regional perspective that most accurately reflects the local reality of our situation."

Long added that the three counties have used best practices to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and maintain hospital capacity. "Joining together with a smaller regional approach," Long said, "allows us to fine tune regulations that protect the health of our residents while getting students back in the classroom and helping to keep our businesses open and economically viable."

New Rules Issued

Under Gov. Newsome's latest scheme to battle the virus, regions come under the Purple Tier when available ICU beds falls below 15%. The Southern California Region was reporting a 10.9% capacity as of last Monday when the Governor issued his new stay-at-home edict that also re-closed many non-essential businesses for a third time.

The Tri-Counties area had 25.6% ICU availability. Santa Barbara County reported 51% of ICU beds were available, and San Luis Obispo County had 48.9% of ICU beds open.

Santa Barbara County Supervisor's Chairman Gregg Hart said, "The letter being sent to state officials is an accurate measure of our regional distinction through both geography and demographics. We are best positioned to understand the critical needs within our region and have existing partnerships to promote the health and economic well-being of our communities."

As of press time, the Governor had not responded to the request for the change.

ICU Patients Low

While SLO County's COVID-19 website (see: www.ReadySLO.org) lists just a handful of people in ICU with 53 total beds countywide, the numbers are not the true picture of ICU availability, nor does the County include the 165 available beds at a field hospital the County set up last spring at the Cal Poly Rec Center, which would greatly change its percentages.

That \$4 million facility, while an amazing accomplishment in teamwork and efficiency, has yet to treat a single COVID-19 patient. But should SLO County's hospitalization numbers get bad enough, it would be put to use.

But while it was designed to handle patients with breathing troubles from the virus, it wouldn't replace an actual ICU room.

County COVID spokeswoman, Michelle Shoresman told Estero Bay News, "While we closely follow ICU bed capacity and communicate frequently with our local hospitals about bed status,

we do not post the total number of ICU beds available because it is rapidly changing.

"We report that number daily to the State Department of Public Health as required so that they can track ICU bed capacity regionally. Regional data is available on their website."

Some Can Stay Open

The latest stay-at-home order prohibits leaving home unless it's for an essential chore, like a doctor's appointment or grocery shopping.

Business closure orders apply to: indoor playgrounds; hair salons, barbershops, and personal care services; wineries, bars, breweries and distilleries, and more, according to the County Health Department.

However, certain businesses can remain open "with modifications," including outdoor recreational facilities, retailers (20% capacity limit), restaurants open for take-out, pick-up or delivery only; hotels (for critical infrastructure support), and others.

Business owners should check the COVID website, www.ReadySLO.org, to see if they fall under the closures, which are supposed to be in effect for another 2 weeks or until the ICU capacity drops again, assuming the Tri-Counties' plea for relief from the Governor is granted.

Quarantine Eased

The County is slackening the coronavirus pandemic response in a minor way, reducing the time it recommends people self-quarantine after being exposed to the virus.

The County Health Officer, Dr. Penny Borenstein, announced that the agency would change the required quarantine period from 14 days to 10 days after the date of exposure.

"Based on local conditions," reads a Dec. 9 news release from SLO County, "the County of San Luis Obispo Public Health Department adopted a reduced COVID-19 quarantine for some people, based on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and California Department of Public Health."

The County cautioned that 14 days is still the preferred quarantine time and was based on what the CDC thinks to be the incubation period for the virus. The 10-day quarantine comes with a catch.

"Anyone who is eligible to reduce their quarantine to 10 days must rigorously adhere to COVID-19 precautions [wear a mask and maintain at least 6 feet of distance from others, and self-monitor for symptoms]. If symptoms occur, they must immediately self-isolate and contact the public health department."

Change Aims to Ease Stress

Dr. Borenstein said the change was an attempt to help people with the mental distress of forced isolation.

"This approach balances a reduced burden of quarantine, including physical and mental health benefits and more complete compliance, against a small possibility of increasing the spread of the virus," said Dr. Borenstein. "It is a good option for some essential workers who are able to strictly follow COVID-19 precautions."

Based on available data, the County said the CDC estimates the risk of transmission after day 10 of quarantine to be about 1%, with an upper limit of about 10%.

The County rejected an even shorter quarantine recommendation from CDC of seven days for those who were exposed but got a negative COVID test, "because that could result in a higher likelihood of transmission and put a strain on testing resources that are already in high demand," according to the County. "A negative test result does not change an individual's duration of quarantine."

Mayor Makes COVID Video

Meanwhile, Morro Bay Mayor John Headding has taped another video for residents regarding the new lockdowns and stay-

at-home orders, urging everyone to wear a mask whenever you go out of your home and adhere to the other guidelines on washing hands often and keeping your distance from others (See: <https://youtu.be/HPBHRVbh3A>).

He also announced an \$80,000 business grant program to assist local businesses, taking monies from the Pacific Gas & Electric settlement to mitigate loss of taxes when Diablo Canyon Power Plant closes, and from other sources.

State Park Campgrounds Close

State Parks decided to close down many of its facilities after the Governor's new edicts, closing campgrounds up and down the North Coast from Montaña de Oro to San Simeon State Beach.

"Due to the critical need to stop the COVID-19 surge and prevent overwhelming regional ICU capacity," reads a news release from State Parks in Sacramento, "the public is advised that the closure of campground sites may be made with little advance notice." The State's reservation service "Reserve California" was to notify all those with reservations who will now not be able to use them, and anyone with questions should call Reserve California's Customer Service line at 1-800-444-7275, open seven days a week, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Camping might be out but local state parks are open for day use. "Day use outdoor areas of park units currently open to the public will remain accessible, including trails and beaches," the release said. "Members of the same household are encouraged to maintain physical and mental health by going to a park to hike, walk, bike ride, off-highway riding or boating, provided that they recreate responsibly by abiding to COVID-19 guidelines."

County Still Testing

The County continues with an aggressive free COVID testing program, extending the hours clinics will be open in Nipomo and Paso Robles.

Locally, the County is offering free tests at the Morro Bay Vet's Hall, 209 Surf St., Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and in San Luis Obispo at the Vet's Hall, on Grand Avenue at Monterey Street, Mondays-Fridays, from 7-7.

Free testing is also available in Grover Beach at the Ramona Gardens Park Center, Mondays-Fridays, 7-7; at the Paso Robles Event Center (Mid State Fairgrounds) Tuesdays-Saturdays, 7-7; and at the Nipomo Community Center, Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, 7-5.

All of the clinics are by appointment only, see: www.EmergencySLO.org/testing. The tests are free to anyone without health insurance, otherwise they will bill your insurance, but there will be no co-pays attached.

For up-to-date COVID information in SLO County, see: www.ReadySLO.org or call (805) 543-2444 Mondays-Fridays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Woman Dies In Fall Off Cliff

The Sheriff's Office is investigating the Dec. 6 death of a Camarillo woman at Montaña de Oro State Park after she was seen falling off a steep cliff.

Sheriff's deputies responded at 4:30 p.m. to Spooner's Cove in the park for a report of a dead body being found, according to a news release.

"Witnesses had observed a female walking alone on the bluff when the woman fell backwards over a 70-foot cliff onto the beach," Sheriff's spokesman Tony Cipolla said. "Cal Fire and State Park Rangers responded to the area where the woman was pronounced deceased at the scene."

The cliffs along the park's Bluff Trail are mostly sheer drop-offs down the beaches below and difficult to access. "Because of



Season's Greetings

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the rugged location of where the body was found," Cipolla said, "a CHP helicopter had to airlift the victim out of the area."

The woman was identified as Natra Ruth Lucas, 49 of Camarillo. The Coroner's Office was to perform an autopsy to determine manner and cause of death. No foul play is suspected, Cipolla said.

County Fire Chief Retires



Cal Fire/County Fire Chief Scott Jalbert (left) retired from the fire service on Dec. 12 after a 33-year career. Chief John Owens was named Interim County Fire Chief and will lead the agency until a replacement is named. Submitted photos

San Luis Obispo County Fire Department will get a new leader after the fire chief retired after over three decades with the fire service.

County Fire Chief, Scott Jalbert, hung up his turnouts Dec. 12 retiring from Cal Fire, which is under contract with the County to provide fire services for the unincorporated areas, as well as several local towns.

Chief Jalbert started with the former California Department of Forestry (CDF) now called Cal Fire as a "limited term/full-time fire apparatus engineer with the Santa Cruz Unit in 1987, according to a Resolution of congratulations passed by County Supervisors. He worked his way up the ranks until he was named Unit Chief on April Fool's Day (April 1) 2016, becoming the de facto County Fire Chief as well.

The Deputy Chief, John Owens, has been named Acting Chief until a permanent replacement is chosen.

Among the "Whereas" passages is the characterization of Chief Jalbert's command tenure, "with prudent oversight, dedicated leadership, commitment to the citizens, and with a vision that The San Luis Obispo County Fire Department will exceed expectations and maintain the highest standards of preparedness, training, and emergency response."

And, "during his 33-year career, Chief Jalbert has worked with different agencies on complex large scale emergency situations such as Incident Commander for the Chimney Fire, Alamo Fire, Avila Fire and the San Bruno Gas Line Explosion; served as an Agency Administrator on the Thomas Fire, Woolsey Fire, Sherpa fire, and the Santa Barbara Mud-slide; Area Commander for the August Complex and the Rocky Mountain Area command in Colorado, and Operation Section Chief for several other large scale events."

Starting out as a seasonal firefighter in the San Mateo-Santa Cruz Unit, Chief Jalbert promoted through the ranks of "Fire Fighter II, Fire Apparatus Engineer, Fire Captain, Training Officer, Battalion Chief, Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief, then Unit Chief."

The Resolution commends Chief Jalbert's service.

"The County of San Luis Obispo, Board of Supervisors, State of California, does hereby commend Scott Jalbert for his meritorious and conscientious mission of protecting life, property, and the natural resources in San Luis Obispo County.

"Be it further resolved, that the Board of Supervisors of San Luis Obispo County hereby wishes Scott Jalbert continued health and prosperity in his future endeavors."

Estero Bay News congratulates Chief Jalbert on his decades of service and wish him a long and happy retirement.

New Probation Office Contract

By Neil Farrell

County Supervisors approved a contract with an engineering firm to plan a new home for the County Probation Department in a spot by the old General Hospital on Johnson Avenue in SLO.

Supervisors approved a \$1.4 million contract with Kitchell for construction management with master architectural services "consistent with a Design-Build project implementation," reads a report from Capital Projects Manager, Robert Ruiz, who works in the Design Division of County Planning and Building.

Currently, the County Probation Department is in "Casa Loma," a 1940s-era home on Bishop Street. The building is "outdated and in need of constant repair," reads Ruiz' report. (It should be noted that this Probation Office is for adults and separate from the Juvenile Services Center on Kansas Avenue, also run by the Probation Department but focusing on the juvenile justice system.)

According to a 2017 facilities study for a new probation office, three sites were looked at. The study concluded that the department needs 31,500 square feet of space and it should be built at the County Health Campus on Johnson Avenue (at Bishop Street), where the Health Department is located, in an area behind the main buildings that front onto Johnson.

In 2019, the County developed a master plan for the Johnson Avenue Campus that "included a programmatic study to determine the square footage required for all functions/departments recommended to be located on the campus over a 20-year timeframe. The conceptual master plan was developed assuming a phased build out of the Campus with the new Probation Department building and associated parking being Phase 1."

The site would be the home of the Probation Department for at least the next 20 years but the project was not without hiccups.

Last January when this plan was first brought to the Supervisors there was an uproar when it called for removing the Child Development Resource Center of the Central Coast, a child daycare facility located on the site.

Supervisors told staff to look at alternatives that included leaving the childcare center where it is. This contract won't include the CDRC's area.

"The Construction Manager - Master Architect contract is for work on Phase 1 of the conceptual master plan only and Phase 1 does not require removal of the CDRC," Ruiz wrote. "The CM-MA's work on Phase 1 will assist in the development of at least one option for build out of remaining phases of the conceptual master plan where the CDRC remains on site, which is consistent with the Board's direction."

Kitchell's contract will include helping the County develop "bridging documents" and assisting in soliciting and selecting a design-build contractor that will both design and construct the new office building.

This design-build method of delivery is relatively new process for SLO County, which has only one other project - the new animal shelter on Oklahoma Avenue under construction now - being done in this manner.

Under design-build, the same company designs and constructs the project, with a company like Kitchell acting as project managers representing the County.

The Supervisor's vote allowed for the County to release a "Request for Statements of Qualifications" (RSOQ) seeking design-build firms to send in qualification statements. A firm would be selected from those applicants and a best price would be solicited for the job.

Supervisors also agreed to establish an account that would pay the top two qualified bidders \$25,000 each to help cover their costs in applying for the job, so long as one is chosen for the contract.

Right now, the County has \$2.75 million set aside for the project that would take it through the "recommendation of the design-build entity," in other words to the point of designing and constructing the building.

The staff plans to return to the Board in September with total project cost, an award for the design-build contract, and whatever budget adjustments or financing options are available.

Cayucos Property Manager Named to Tourism Board

County Supervisors have re-appointed a local woman to the tourism board in Cayucos for another 1-year term.

Supervisors approved appointing Melissa Kurry to the Cayucos Local Area Advisory Board, part of the County Tourism Business Improvement District (CBID). The Cayucos board calls itself the "Visitor Alliance of Cayucos."

Kurry is a property manager/broker with See Lyon Beach Rentals and Liberty Realty, according to her application for the

board. "I have been in property management for 17 years," she wrote, "and have worked in the hospitality industry for 20 years (including 3 years employed at the Cayucos Beach Inn)."

Kurry said she grew up in Cayucos and has lived there the majority of her life. "Although I [currently] live in Morro Bay," she wrote in her application, "my only places of employment have been in Cayucos."

She recently resigned an administrative assistant job with the Visitor's Alliance and after changing her role with See Lyon, said she was ready to join the Visitor's Alliance board.

The Alliance is one of seven local TBID boards under the County's assessment district covering the unincorporated towns, which is funded by a 2% per room night tax on lodging businesses - motels, hotels, B&Bs and vacation rentals.

Half of the money collected in each town - Cayucos, Cambria, Los Osos and San Simeon on the North Coast - goes back to a local advisory board, who decides how best to spend it supporting tourism in their respective communities.

Supervisors first formed the advisory boards in 2011 at the behest of the lodging industry, which asked the County to establish the assessment district.

Businesses can either pay the tax themselves or pass it through to a guest's bill, as is done with the County's regular 9% transient occupancy taxes.

So-called bed taxes have taken a huge hit since March when the coronavirus pandemic response first kicked in and the Governor issued a stay-at-home edict and shut down all "non-essential businesses," motels included.

Along with that came the near total cessation of tourism promotions in keeping with the Governor's orders, ostensibly to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

New Round of Small Business Grants

Morro Bay City Council on Monday handed out COVID-19 business assistance grants approved in October and is taking applications now for another smaller round of grants that will be awarded in early January.

City Manager Scott Collins told Estero Bay News that the October grants, totaling \$80,000, were awarded Dec. 14. "These funds," Collins said, "will support 20 Morro Bay businesses and their over 100 combined employees."

The business grant program is aimed at helping local businesses that sustained great economic hardship because of the Governor's Coronavirus Pandemic response and the shutdown of much of Morro Bay's service economy businesses.

Mike's Barber Shop owner, Jon Elliott, was grateful for the help. "COVID-19 has hurt many businesses in our area," he said, "including ours. So we really appreciate the much-needed support from the City. These funds will help us weather this latest surge."

The Governor's latest round of edicts re-established his stay-at-home orders from last spring, ordering all residents not to leave their homes unless it's for an essential reason, like to shop for groceries, or a doctor's appointment.

The edict also ended restaurants being able to serve a restricted number of customers indoors, although takeout and home and drive-up delivery are still allowed. Motels are also restricted to only renting rooms for essential workers.

"The timing of the additional grant funds is critical," Collins said, "as the Governor extended further restrictions last week. The new restrictions impact gyms, restaurants, hair salons, barbershops, lodging and others."

The Council on Dec. 8 approved another \$50,000 in business grants, taken from a special funding source set up by a law that seeks to ease the tax losses for government agencies when Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant ceases operations in 2025.

"The City is funding the entire grant program with California Senate Bill 1090 funds," Collins said, "which are for the express purpose of supporting economic development."

Applications are being taken now for the new grant monies and closes at the end of December. The City intends to award this second round of grants in early January 2021," Collins said.

There are qualifications. "The grants are available to active Morro Bay businesses with 25 employees or fewer," Collins said, "and must be in good standing with the City and COVID-19 requirements."

Interested businesses can get information online at: www.cityofmorrobayca.gov or email to: citymanager@morrobayca.gov.



Melissa Kurry was re-appointed to the tourism board in Cayucos.



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Indiana Man Arrested for Child Porn

An Indiana man was arrested after he reportedly sent child pornography to a juvenile in Los Osos.

According to a news release, Sheriff's deputies were contacted by a Los Osos resident on Sept. 25 regarding a suspected criminal act.

"It was learned that a minor resident of San Luis Obispo County was contacted on the Internet via an online gaming platform and lewd images were sent to the victim," Sheriff's spokesman Tony Cipolla said.

The initial crime report was taken and forwarded to the "San Luis Obispo County Counter Human Trafficking Team," Cipolla said, "a team comprised of investigators from the Sheriff's Special Operations Unit and the District Attorney's Office Bureau of Investigation, who assumed investigative responsibility for the continuing investigation."

Investigators determined that the child porn was sent by a man in Columbus, Ind. The SLO County team contacted the FBI office in Santa Maria, which brought in an FBI office in Indiana, and along with the Bartholomew County Sheriff's Office in Indiana, took over the case.

The suspect was identified as Jordan Fields, 20 of Columbus, Ind., who was interviewed by the FBI and Bartholomew County Sheriff's Office on Nov. 13.

Cipolla said Fields was subsequently arrested on suspicion of child exploitation and possession of child pornography. "Criminal proceedings are pending in Bartholomew County, Indiana," Cipolla said.



Jordan Fields

Sheriff Seeks Armed Gunman



The Sheriff's Office is asking for information on this man who allegedly committed armed robbery at a gas station in Nipomo.

Sheriff's deputies are investigating an armed robbery in Nipomo where a solo gunman stuck up a gas station and made off with an undisclosed amount of money and merchandise.

According to Sheriff's spokesman, Tony Cipolla, at 11 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 3 they got a report of a robbery at the Chevron gas station, 460 W. Tefft St., Nipomo.

"Witnesses say a man entered the station," Cipolla said, "displayed a black pistol and demanded money and goods from the clerk. The suspect made off with an undisclosed amount of cash and items and was last seen running away toward South Oakglan Avenue in Nipomo. No one was hurt in the incident."

The suspect was described as a thin, Hispanic male in his mid-20s, 5-feet 9-inches tall. He was wearing dark blue jeans, a black or navy blue sweatshirt and a dark hat when he stuck up the gas station.

He was also wearing a facemask, as per the Governor's coronavirus pandemic edicts and store policy, so even though he looked directly at the surveillance camera, his actual face was concealed from view.

If anyone has information on this incident, contact the Sheriff's Detective Division at (805) 781-4500.

County Grant for Drug Treatment Facility

San Luis Obispo County will increase the amount of funding to build a drug treatment and detox facility next door to its homeless shelter in SLO.

Supervisors approved increasing an existing contract with Community Action Partnership of SLO (CAPSLO) by some \$205,000 for the 40 Prado Medication Assisted Residential Treatment Facility, a 2,660 square foot facility located adjacent to the existing homeless services center on Prado Road. It will be owned by CAPSLO but operated by a contractor under the County Behavior Health Department.

The increase is added to previous funding from the County of \$500,000 from AB 109, the law that realigned the state prison system and county jails, \$207,500 from Mental Health Services Act (MSHA) reserves, for a total of \$852,000. The project is also expected to get \$557,000 from "other sources," totaling \$1.26 million — the construction cost for the drug treatment facility.

"Behavioral Health and CAPSLO project approximately 200 county residents each year would be served at this new facility," the County report reads.

The report acknowledges that the costs of the project have risen considerably this year, which has also delayed construction.

"CAPSLO made the request for MHSA funds," the report said, "as the initial cost estimates to complete construction have increased, in large part due to the delay and economic and supply chain issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Hard costs for materials [for example, lumber] have increased by more than 25%. A construction timeline that pre-COVID would have seen the project completed by the Spring of 2021, has now been pushed into the Summer of 2021."

The plan is for eight to 10 "flex" beds for SLO County adults, ages 18-64, according to the report. Patients would be expected to stay at the facility six to eight days, "for medication assisted withdrawal treatment and up to 30 days in a residential treatment program while clients prepare to transition to sober living and continued treatment."

A drug treatment facility has long been needed in SLO

County. "The 40 Prado Medication Assisted Residential Treatment Facility is a new project designed to meet a need that has been expressed by the community, local law enforcement agencies, County of San Luis Obispo Drug and Alcohol Services, county and local government, and other social service agencies for over 30 years."

San Simeon Inks New Tourism Contract

By Neil Farrell

Though the coronavirus pandemic response has throttled down tourism in San Luis Obispo County with its stay-at-home orders, restaurant closures and cancelation of all live entertainment and large gatherings, the industry in San Simeon inked a new contract for tourism marketing.

County Supervisors on Nov. 10 approved a \$160,000 contract with Solterra Strategies, Inc. "to continue to provide marketing services to the San Simeon Local Area," reads a staff report by Tessa Cornejo of the County Administration Office.

San Simeon Area is the local entity under the County Tourism Business Improvement District or CBID.

CBID is funded through a 2% tax on the cost of a room night at all motels, hotels, B&Bs and vacation rentals in the unincorporated areas of SLO County such as San Simeon (Cayucos, Cambria and Los Osos, too).

Half of that money is used collectively by the County CBID Advisory Board to market the unincorporated areas of the county.

The other half is directed back to advisory bodies in each of the towns made up of industry professionals appointed by the County Supervisors.

It is separate from the Tourism Business Improvement Districts or TBIDs operating in the incorporated cities of SLO County — Morro Bay, SLO, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach and others.

Solterra was already under contract with the San Simeon advisory board and its contract extension is for another 15 months. Oddly enough, the contract discussions and approvals have come entirely during the Coronavirus Pandemic response that has included several anti-tourism edicts — namely stay-at-home orders, restaurants closures and the closure of most tourist attractions in SLO County, most notably Hearst Castle, which is San Simeon's biggest tourist draw.

The SS board voted to recommend the contract be extended back in July and the County's CBID Advisory Board affirmed that recommendation in August with Supervisors making it official in November.

Solterra's scope of work calls for a mix of "public relations, social media, email marketing, paid advertising and seasonal promotions."

As for who's watching the henhouse or in this case \$160,000 of taxpayer money, it isn't the County.

"As a facilitator of a requested program," reads Cornejo's report, "the County has not established performance criteria beyond the legal contractual obligations to expend the funds for identified purposes."

"The onus is on the designated contractors that are selected



CITY OF MORRO BAY ADVISORY BODY VACANCIES

Applications are currently being accepted to fill current and upcoming 2021 vacancies on the following Bodies:

- Planning Commission (3)
- Public Works Advisory Board (5)
- Citizens Oversight/Finance Advisory Committee (1)
- Harbor Advisory Board (5)
 - Marine-Oriented Business (1)
 - Member-at-Large (1)
 - Morro Bay Commercial Fishermen's Association (1-Member, 2-Alternates)
- Recreation & Parks Commission (2)
- Tourism Business Improvement District (TBID) Advisory Board (3)
 - Hotelier Member-at-Large (2)
 - Hotelier-50 Rooms or Less (1)
- COUNTY/REGIONAL BOARD
 - SLOCOG Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) (1)

Applications for these positions may be obtained on the City Clerk's Advisory Body Webpage by going on-line at www.morrobayca.gov under the "Your Government" tab, then select "Boards, Committees, Commissions," or by request to the City Clerk's office at (805) 772-6568 or via email cityclerk@morrobay.gov.

The closing date for submitting applications is Thursday, December 31, 2020, at 5:00pm. Interviews are tentatively scheduled for January 12, 2021. Applicants should be present at the interviews to be considered by the City Council.

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by a local area advisory board to meet the expectations of the lodging business owners paying the assessment. The San Simeon Local Advisory Board will track the performance of Solterra Strategies Inc. in providing the services outlined in the scope of work."

Ortiz-Legg Sworn in



District 3 Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg was recently sworn into office by County Clerk-Recorder Tommy Gong. Ortiz-Legg was appointed to the seat of the late Adam Hill. She has a background in public affairs, regulatory compliance, and project management. Since 2010, she has supported a portfolio of utility-scale solar projects in San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Santa Barbara and Kern counties.

Ortiz-Legg holds a bachelor's degree from Pepperdine University, and a master's degree in international public policy from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

She has served on various community organizations including the SLO County Economic Vitality Corporation, the SLO International Film Festival, Rabobank Customer Advisory Group, and the SLO County Council of Governments Citizen's Transportation Committee.

Cal Fire Holiday Safety Tips



Each year during the holiday season fires injure 2,000 people in the U.S. and cause over \$500 million dollars in damage. By following these holiday safety tips you can help keep your family and home firesafe this holiday season:

Candles:

Candles are beautiful, popular, and dangerous. Do not leave burning candles unattended, or place them near flammable materials. Make sure they are in a secure place where children and pets won't knock them over. Put candles in a non-tip candleholder before you light them. Make sure all candles are extinguished before you leave the home or office, and before going to bed. The most common area of origin for candle fires is the bedroom, then living rooms, bathrooms and the kitchen.

Lights:

Make sure that all indoor and outdoor holiday lights bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory. Throw away any set with cracked lights, frayed cords, or loose or damaged sockets. Don't overload electrical outlets or run extension cords under carpets, across doorways, or near heaters. Be sure extension cords aren't pinched behind or under furniture, and unplug all decorative lights before leaving your home or going to bed.

Never run extension cords across lawns, driveways, or traffic areas. Power for all outdoor lighting should be supplied by permanent weatherproof wiring installed by a professional electrician.

Kitchen:

During the holidays much time is spent cooking, so it's critical to take precautions in the kitchen. Be sure to keep pot handles

and electrical appliance cords out of the reach of children. Put a lid on a pot or pan to extinguish a food or grease fire, and in the event of an oven fire, turn off the heat and close the oven door.

Fireplaces:

Before using your fireplace, have your chimney inspected by a professional for proper installation, cracks, blockages (bird nests), leaks, or creosote build up. Creosote is a chemical substance that forms when wood burns, accumulates in chimneys and can cause a chimney fire if not removed. Be sure to open the flue for adequate ventilation when using the fireplace. Always use a fire screen, and burn only material appropriate for fireplaces. Never burn trash or paper in a fireplace. Burning paper can float up your chimney and onto your roof or onto your neighbors' roof and can cause a fire. Remove ashes from the fireplace in a metal container and store them somewhere outside your home.

Be Prepared!

Test all smoke detectors in the house to make sure that they are in proper working order, and be sure to install fresh batteries every six months. Be sure that all family members know how to call the fire department, and make an escape plan so that everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency.

Poly Engineer Students Adapt to COVID Challenges



Dylan Moreland, an industrial engineering student, is working on a senior project sponsored by Viasat, a Carlsbad-based firm that offers high-speed satellite internet around the world. The company, a longtime Cal Poly supporter, is sponsoring a lab for industrial and manufacturing engineering students.

As industrial and manufacturing engineering students prepare for careers that will likely be impacted by COVID-19, a newly sponsored lab at Cal Poly will help them adapt workforces to the unique challenges posed by the pandemic.

The Viasat Advanced IME (industrial, manufacturing and engineering) Lab will receive \$125,000 to fund hardware, software and senior projects over the next five years. The gift will also support faculty professional development and research. The lab, in Room 240 of Building 192, is sponsored by Viasat Inc., a global communications company based in northern San Diego County.

Given the technical and economic challenges posed by the pandemic, Dan Waldorf, chair of the IME Department, said the donation comes at a time when students need to be trained to face changing work environments and demands.

"During COVID and into the future," Waldorf said, "the ability to collect, analyze, and make decisions based on large amounts of data will be extremely important for many, many fields, including healthcare services, manufacturing and distribution logistics, and development of new technology products."

"Industrial engineers solve the business problems of improved operations in these fields using the methods of data analytics and an integration of smart data-capturing devices. The Viasat lab sponsorship will make sure we stay up to date in these fields and that our students and faculty have the resources to learn by doing relevant projects — including senior projects, course projects, research projects and masters projects."

The lab focuses on industrial engineering, which seeks to optimize processes.

"We design supply chain systems here," Waldorf said. "We design facilities for operation. We deal with analytics and apply them so we can make better decisions in operations systems. And we also work with industrial Internet of Things and automation, and the new generation of devices and equipment that need to be optimized and efficient for the future."

Viasat is a longtime Cal Poly supporter that currently employs more than 120 Cal Poly graduates, making the university a

key pipeline for talent to the Carlsbad-based firm that offers high-speed satellite internet.

"By continuing to support the education of students at Cal Poly, we are setting them up for success in industry, including here at Viasat," said Riley Elliott, an industrial engineering manager at the company, who earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Cal Poly and is a member of the university's Industry Advisory Board.

Dylan Moreland, an industrial engineering senior, is working on a senior project sponsored by Viasat that has clear real-world applications creating a location tracking system to help the company with its inventory management.

"They've tasked us with building an easy-to-use dashboard — a visual representation of the factory floor — so they can see, at a glance, where all the product is," he said.

Moreland will create a mock manufacturing process in the lab to test the dashboard "so we can validate our solutions and make sure they work in San Diego."

Meanwhile, Mohamed Awwad, an assistant professor in the department, said the support will help him and students explore research ranging from investigating new technologies to developing responses to COVID-19 challenges on global supply chains and on people's daily lives.

"Many of those students could present their work at international conferences," Awwad said. "And some will continue to publish their research in the coming months."

How Will Vaccines Get Distributed in SLO County?

Local hospital workers and long-term care facility residents and staff will be among the first to receive a COVID-19 vaccination in a matter of days. Due to limited supplies, the County is taking a phased approach to vaccine distribution over the coming weeks and months.

"There is light at the end of this tunnel. A vaccine will be here soon," said County Health Officer Dr. Penny Borenstein. "A safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is one of the most important tools for ending the COVID-19 pandemic."

Two different COVID-19 vaccinations will be made available to some San Luis Obispo County residents by the end of December. Those vaccines will reduce their risk of getting COVID-19 by working with their body's natural defenses to recognize the virus that causes COVID-19 and produce antibodies to fight the virus. The County Public Health Department will receive 1,950 doses in the coming days that will be distributed to local front-line health care workers. Long-term care facilities should receive their first doses by the end of the month.

County health officials have been preparing for vaccine storage for several months now and are working with local health care professionals on a vaccination distribution plan. The vaccines will have limited availability at first, reaching those with the highest risk of becoming infected and spreading COVID-19. The California Public Health Department (CDPH) and United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) both recommend a phased approach to distributing the vaccine because there will initially be a limited supply.

"The ultimate goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as large quantities are available, but until then we are going to distribute the limited supply we have to the highest-risk individuals this year," Dr. Borenstein said. "As more supply becomes available, more people in our community will have the opportunity to get vaccinated."

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Police Blotter



Morro Bay Police Logs

- **Nov. 29:** Police responded to a reported assault at 4:15 p.m. in the 600 block of Morro. Logs indicated they arrested a 46-year-old dingus for suspicion of resisting arrest and infliction of corporal injury to a spouse or cohabitant, and tossed him into the dungeon. It was the second visit to the unhappy home that day for police, who also were called at 7:40 that morning but no arrest was made, an apparent case of second time's one too many.
- **Nov. 29:** Police were called to Morro Shores Inn & Suites in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd., where a woman said her friend's car that she was apparently using got stolen. Officers told her to have her friend report it to the cops in her town, an apparent case of talk to the hand.
- **Nov. 28:** Police responded to a home in the 900 block of Pecho where they confiscated a firearm after someone apparently got a 72-hour timeout with County Mental Health.
- **Nov. 28:** Kings Cigarettes Store on Quintana reported the unauthorized use of a credit card, another sign of the perils of smoking.
- **Nov. 28:** Some scoundrel stole a flag from a condo complex in the 900 block of Morro. No word on what flag was taken, so the target of the anarchy is unknown.
- **Nov. 28:** Someone reported vandalism at 10:18 a.m. at the Coleman Park. Apparently looking at the dilapidated mess of a park, police couldn't determine what was vandalized.
- **Nov. 28:** Police contacted a suspicious man they caught at 2:30 a.m. apparently sneaking around at Coleman Park. The 27-year-old fellow was nicked for a parole violation and alleged possession of drug paraphernalia.
- **Nov. 27:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 5 p.m. at Quintana and Kennedy Way. Logs indicated the driver, 46, hit a triple jump — suspended license, probation violation and possession of glass crack pipe — and it was a hop, skip and a jump to the hoosegow.
- **Nov. 27:** Someone turned in a red, Huffu bicycle they'd found in the 1300 block of Main.
- **Nov. 26:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 7 p.m. in the 1200 block of Embarcadero. The 43-year-old driver was arrested for suspicion of drunk driving, possession of paraphernalia, false registration and a suspended license. His lady passenger, 30, no doubt just along for the ride, was nicked on suspicion of being high on drugs.
- **Nov. 25:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 9:24 p.m. in the 1800 block of Main. Logs indicated the 50-year-old fellow was cited and released for suspicion of possession of paraphernalia, his stash apparently gone up in smoke.
- **Nov. 25:** Someone reported an apparent fender-bender at 12:30 p.m. in the Rite Aid parking lot in the 700 block of Quintana. No injuries reported.
- **Nov. 24:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 9:30 p.m. at Albertson's Market on Quintana. The 28-year-old apparent plod was nicked for suspicion of possessing methamphetamine.
- **Nov. 23:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at midnight in the 400 block of Quintana that apparently didn't split town soon enough, as the woman driver, 44, was tossed for suspicion of driving schnookered on hooch and schnuckered on CNS depressants. Logs indicated she was on probation for burglary and so had to give a chemical test.
- **Nov. 23:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 8:20 p.m. in the 600 block of Quintana. The driver, 43, had a suspended license

and got taken down to the stationhouse, where he was cited and released, a born-again pedestrian.

- **Nov. 23:** A citizen in the 2700 block of Main had his or her identity stolen, and we have no idea who they are.
- **Nov. 22:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 9 a.m. in the 900 block of Piney Way. The 49-year-old driver was cited for no license and his car was arrested and towed off to the impound yard.
- **Nov. 21:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:22 p.m. on Hwy 1 at Morro Bay Boulevard. Logs indicated the woman driver, 53, was arrested for a suspended license that she knew about because she had three active bench warrants. Her male passenger, 58, had a warrant and the scofflaws shared a cab to the gaol.
- **Nov. 21:** Some tough luck person reported credit card fraud at the Lucky 7 Store in the 1800 block of Main.
- **Nov. 21:** A minor car crash was reported at Lila Keiser Park at 2:15 p.m. No injuries reported, but the cars will never be the same.
- **Nov. 20:** Police responded to a reported assault at 8:24 p.m. in the 2600 block of Ironwood. Logs indicated a 41-year-old apparent battleaxe was arrested for alleged battery on a police officer.
- **Nov. 20:** A citizen told police that some rapscaillon stole the license plate off his trailer.
- **Nov. 19:** A citizen at Pacific and Bernardo said his or her innocent vehicle was vandalized.
- **Nov. 19:** Police responded at 5:30 p.m. to an assault reported in the 600 block of Monterey. Logs indicated some boulder slapped a phone out of an ex-girlfriend's hand, which might explain the "ex" part.
- **Nov. 19:** Police were called at 10:30 a.m. to the 1700 block of Embarcadero where someone said some apparent Sasquatch stole

his Yeti cooler. Police found the wayward ice chest and returned it.

- **Nov. 19:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at the suspect time of 1 a.m. in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd. A 25-year-old fellow from Paso Robles got pipped at the post and was arrested for a suspended license and possession of suspected drug paraphernalia. A 29-year-old passenger was arrested for suspicion of giving a false name to the cops, which led them to a bench warrant he had, and then to finding suspected paraphernalia, a case of not leaving the beach party early enough.
- **Nov. 19:** Police stopped a suspicious fellow traipsing up the 900 block of Morro Bay Blvd. The 46-year-old dude was nicked for suspicion of being high on drugs and possessing a crack pipe.
- **Nov. 17:** Police responded at 3:18 p.m. to a report of a shot fired in an occupied building at the Sunshine Inn in the 600 block of Main.
- **Nov. 16:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 8:18 p.m. waltzing along at Main and Marina. Logs indicated the 25-year-old fellow was arrested for suspicion of possessing drug paraphernalia and a "usable quantity" of unspecified drugs, which is why you never save a little bit for later. He was cited and released.
- **Nov. 16:** Some maniac went on a vandalism spree and broke several windows at businesses in the same neighborhood. Several bricks were thrown through the front windows at the Morro Bay Best Buy Thrift Store, 730 MBB. Someone threw a brick through a 3' by 4' plate glass window at Foster's Freeze next door; and someone busted out a window at the Chamber of Commerce half a block away on Harbor Street. These atrocities follow someone busting out windows at the Achievement House Thrift Store on Morro Bay Boulevard, a few doors down from Foster's Freeze, several days earlier.

The Official Handing Over of The Keys



Darren and Mari Nichols (left) officially handed over the keys to the new owner, Jeff Fairbairn and his General Manager Brooke Eddy, to what was known as "Nichol's Pizza-N-Grill."

After months of escrow during a pandemic, Jeff now has the keys and is preparing to open up in mid January. Jeff owns Rock-N-Robles Grill and Pizza Kitchen located

near Lake Nacimiento in the North County. The new location for Jeff here in Los Osos will be called, Rock-N-Osos Grill and Pizza Kitchen.

Watch out for a grand opening and possible Ribbon Cutting in early 2021.
Photo by Dean Sullivan

Los Osos Rexall Donates to Spooner Ranch House



For years the folks at Los Osos Rexall have been telling customers it is important to shop at local businesses because the money has a chance to stay in the community. When you shop online, or mail off for your prescriptions, the revenue leaves our community.

"We are so thankful for our customers and patients that support our business, that we wanted to give back to a local project," said Jason Tewell of Los Osos Rexall.

"This month we decided to get behind a beneficial fundraising opportunity... the cleaning and restoration of the Spooner Ranch House in Montana de Oro. We had such a great response and ended up raising over \$2,000 to the project to clean it up. Many of our customers, and people that weren't our regular customers came in to support the project. Many had a past history to the Spooner House saying they got married or were just happy we were going to help restore it and keep the history alive. We here at Rexall want to give a huge thanks to the people of Los osos for shopping with us and helping us raise funds for the Spooner House project." Photo by Dean Sullivan.

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Community

Love For Sale in Cambria

By Jill Turnbow



The Love Story Project located at 734 Main St in the West Village of Cambria. Photo by Alan Fraser

Perhaps you have been curious about the declarations of love on the exterior of one of Cambria's most unique shops, The Love Story Project. Pop inside the store and you will see large metal signs, artwork, tree ornaments and photo prints, all focused on peace, harmony, and love.

Owners Shari and Alan Fraser are professional photographers who, after shooting hundreds of weddings and family portraits, decided to anchor themselves with a storefront in Cambria. When the shop first opened the idea was to expand the photography and begin a project to document love stories.

"I'm very interested in Story Core, a National story archive project which documents the everyday lives of people," Shari said. "Stories are powerful. I wanted to travel the country and focus on documenting just the love stories."

At the time, having a small child put that plan on hold and she and Alan found the location in Cambria in which they could settle down. Over time the store has organically grown into more retail. Vibrant, colorful art fills the walls including metal art, photography, and lots of gift ideas. Most of the art is by local artists or family members. But the most popular of all is their photo printing. The Love Story Project can print photos right from a customer's phone and mount them on metal or wood.

"People just love it," Alan said. "And, they can watch us do the printing right there. An additional monitor has been added up front so that people can still watch from a safe distance."

"It was pretty scary when we had to shut our doors back in March," said Alan. "But we were able to take a lot of what we do online, and we got so much support, especially from the locals."

I would deliver the projects to their home. I'm still doing that for our local customers."

The Love Story Project was closed for almost two months. And when they were finally allowed to re-open they were unsure if customers would return. "Fortunately, they did," said Shari. "But it was nerve-wracking at first."

Shari says the focus of their shop is the customer service. "We take the time to work with everyone on their photos. We can print in about 35 different sizes and on several different materials. The customer gets to play a part in the finished project."

They can also video and document love stories which are archived on their website.

"We think of the shop as 'vintage-modern.' It's not like anything else around," Alan said. "Everything here is positive, promoting peace and love. It's awesome."

The Love Story Project has done everything it can to ensure

you have a safe shopping experience as well. Barriers at the counter, a one-way aisle to browse, and sanitizer at the door. "We want our customers to feel comfortable, and we keep our distance," said Shari.

The shop is located at 734 Main St in the West Village of Cambria. You can also order online by visiting their website thelovestoryproject.org.

Painting to be Auctioned for Friends of the Harbor Dept.



Morro Bay artist, Ardella Swanberg, is shown with her painting 'Harbor Storm,' which will be auctioned off by the Friends of the Morro Bay Harbor Department as part of a fund-raising drive to help repower a used patrol boat the City is buying from Port San Luis. Submitted photo

The Friends of the Morro Bay Harbor Department continue to raise money to help refurbish a used patrol boat and are conducting an on-line auction for a piece of fine art painted by a local artist.

The Friends group is auctioning off the original painting, "Harbor Storm," done in 2019 by Ardella Swanberg with bids being taken until 8 p.m. Monday, Dec. 21 (see: <https://friendsof-hembhd.org/art-auction-harbor-storm>).

Harbor Storm was painted from a photo Swanberg took of harbor patrol officers in a boat eying stormy seas and huge breakers at the harbor entrance.

"It was very scary to watch," she said, "but four or five of the Harbor Patrol members stood calmly as the boat bounced up and down on the waves. I thought about it until November and decided to paint the scene to enter it in the Central Coast Watercolor Society 2020 Aquarius Show."

The painting was not only accepted for the Aquarius Show but also made the cover of the show's brochure and won the "Chris Van Winkle Memorial Award."

A native of California, Swanberg said she's lived most of her life away from the Golden State, spending time in Texas, Minnesota, Michigan, Spain, Florida, North Carolina, Maryland, and Malaysia.

"We have lived in small towns, bustling cities, and out in the country," Swanberg said. "In 1998 we moved onto a 1,000-acre ranch in Cayucos to be near family and enjoy the country life. We moved to Morro Bay in 2015."

She studied art at the University of Minnesota and is active with the Cayucos Art Association, Central Coast Watercolor Society, Morro Bay Art Association, the Gallery at Marina Square, and Wednesday Irregulars, as well as, the Estero Radio Club (ham radio operators), SLO Emergency Communications Council, and

Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Her works are available at Art Central in SLO, the Gallery at Marina Square and at the Morro Bay Art Center in Morro Bay.

All of the proceeds from the sale of the painting will go toward the Friends' goal of raising \$110,000 to pay to repower and re-equip a used Radon Craft patrol boat that the Harbor Department plans to buy from Port San Luis Harbor Patrol.

The boat will replace a workhorse of a boat that has been in use since the early 1980s but must now be replaced. Though the twin engine Radon is a fine vessel, and still has life left in it, perhaps as a personal sport fishing boat, it no longer passes muster for use in the kids of search and rescue calls the Harbor Patrol often goes out on.

Flu Shot Clinic Today

The City of Morro Bay is holding a free, drive-thru flu shot clinic today in what could be a test run for a future vaccination effort against COVID-19.

The flu clinic is set for 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 17 at St. Timothy's Catholic Church, 962 Piney Way. Patients are asked to enter St. Tim's on Kennedy Way to drive through.

The clinic is in conjunction with the San Luis Obispo County Health Department and the Estero Bay Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Getting a flu shot this year is particularly important," the City said in a news release, "because, like COVID-19, influenza is a respiratory virus and we want to do everything we can to minimize having two respiratory outbreaks circulating simultaneously in our populations. Getting a flu vaccine is an essential part of protecting your health and your family's health this season."

If readers miss the clinic, it should be noted that flu shots are available at local pharmacies, Urgent Care, and doctor's offices.

Preregister online at: <https://forms.gle/9UhyzCoQcFbiNf-dWA>. "This flu shot event will also help prepare for possible public distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine in Spring and Summer of 2021, the City said.

Events and Activities

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

The Morro Bay Recreation Department is hosting "Breakfast with Santa," a drive-thru fundraiser set for 8:30-11:30 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 19 at the Morro Bay Community Center, 1001 Kennedy Way.

Tickets are \$10 and include a pancake breakfast and a chance to visit with Santa Claus, a rare occasion this year. You must pre-register with the rec department by Dec. 18, go online to: <https://apm.activecommunities.com/morrobay/Home> to register.

Kids can drop off letters with Santa (and don't forget to include an email address so the rotund, bearded fellow can get back to you). Santa will hand out goodie bags, too.

•••

Cambria Center for the Arts Virtual Gallery Online has issued a Call for Artists: Plein Air Painting for a show running January 9 – February 28, 2021 at www.CambriaCenterfortheArts.org - Gallery. A special reception takes place virtually on January 9 at 4:30 p.m.

This exhibit feature plein air paintings, but all other 2D and 3D artists are welcome to submit work for this exhibit as well. Register/submit art online January 2 – 5, 2021.

Open to all artists. Membership with Cambria Center for the Arts is not required, but encouraged. More details can be found at

Events and Activities Continued on page 10

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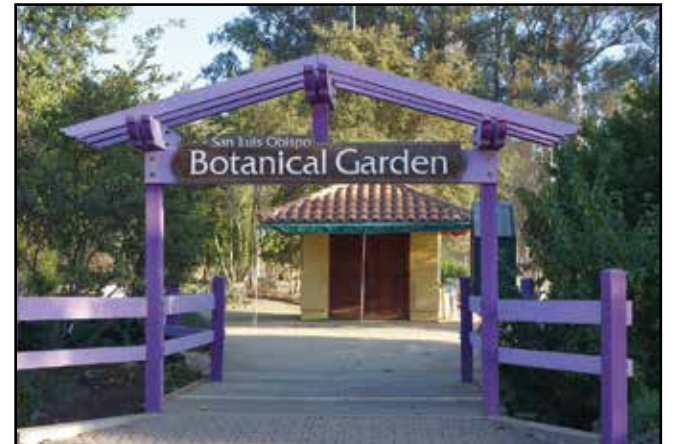
Community

Events and Activities From page 9

cambriacenterforthearts.org/requirements-to-show.
 Membership is encouraged but not required. CCA members' fee is \$10 for each entry, and for non-members is \$25 per piece. Two out of every 3 entries are required to be available for sale. CCA will keep 30% commission for each sale. Artists are responsible for shipping to buyer. Payment for art sold is giving out at end of following month.



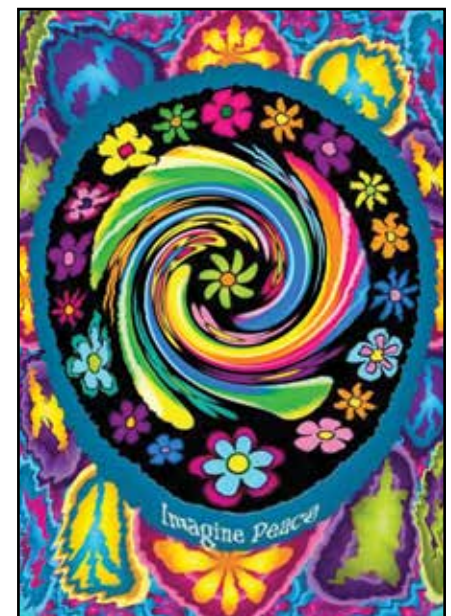
Win this Fender. The ROCK 97.3/107.3 Community Radio had to forgo their traditional fundraiser this year, so they are giving away a Fender P-Bass signed by Sting. Contestants can register by making a donation of any amount, as many times as they wish to register. The drawing is Dec 31 just shy of midnight. To register, go to <https://www.esterobayradio.org/giveaway>.



The San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden is growing! Starting January 1, 2021, the Garden will have a new entrance location. There will also be a new admission fee of \$5 per visitor, while Garden Members and children ages 12 and under remain free. Your support of the Garden greatly helps it remain a treasured educational and recreational resource for everyone.

The Garden strives to honor and preserve our connection with nature. Visit the SLO Botanical Garden at 3450 Dairy Creek Road to see the unique, drought-tolerant plants from the five mediterranean climates. You may also visit the website at slobg.org to learn more about becoming a Garden Member to gain access to the Garden all year long.

San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden is celebrating over 30 years of sowing seeds and growing together.



Call for artists. Art Center Morro Bay, 835 Main St., presents the exhibition "Flower Power" January 7– March 8, 2021.

"Flower Power" is a slogan emblematic of the counter-culture of the 1960s. During the Summer of Love (1967), flowers became powerful symbols of peace, a concept plucked from Buddhist art.

More than merely decorative, floral imagery has helped convey ideas from the refined to the revolutionary for thousands of years. Flowers in contemporary art are connected to particular cultural legacies but are also open to new interpretations, moored to the past yet provoking questions about our future.

Flowers offer decorative appeal; symbolic and healing values; as well as ways of thinking about a wide range of topics — the natural environment in which we live; the communities we build; and the commodities we buy.

Artists are invited to submit up to three 2D (wall-hung) art-



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works in all media. Additionally, artists are encouraged to submit to both featured 3D themes:

- The Role of the Vase - Artists may submit up to three vases.
- The Art of Ikebana will feature the work of botanical artists, green professionals, flower growers and floral designers. One complete arrangement incorporating living flowers or plants will be accepted per artist. Floral arrangements need to last and be replaced by the artist when they wilt.

Artists may submit pieces in both 2D and 3D categories, plus up to five folio prints and ten note cards. For entry forms, visit <https://artcentermorrobay.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/take-in-form-2D-10-2020-copy.pdf> (2D) and/or <https://artcentermorrobay.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/take-in-form-3D-and-Jewelry-10-2020-1.pdf> (3D). Take-in is Tuesday, January 5, 2021, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Art Center Morro Bay is open Sunday-Monday 12-4 pm and Thursday-Saturday 12-4 p.m.

For more information, contact www.artcentermorrobay.org; artcenter.morrobay@gmail.com; (805) 772-2504.

Send your event listing at least three weeks in advance to Editor@EsteroBayNews.com. Make sure to include the who, what, why, where and when of the event and contact information. Please, type out in paragraph form rather than attaching flyers.

Museum Needs Commercial Fishing Photos

The Morro Bay Maritime Museum is planning a special exhibit dedicated to commercial fishing and is calling on the community to help accumulate the show.

They want to develop an exhibit wall inside the museum, located in the Front Street parking lot on the Embarcadero opposite the Great American Fish Co. (look for the submarine), dedicated to the men and women of the sea.

"Every commercial fisherman has a unique photo of the trials and tribulations of being a commercial fisherman," said MBMMA president Scott Mather. "Whether it's a photo of their boat, catch, or a disaster that befell them, we would like to consider it in our exhibit."

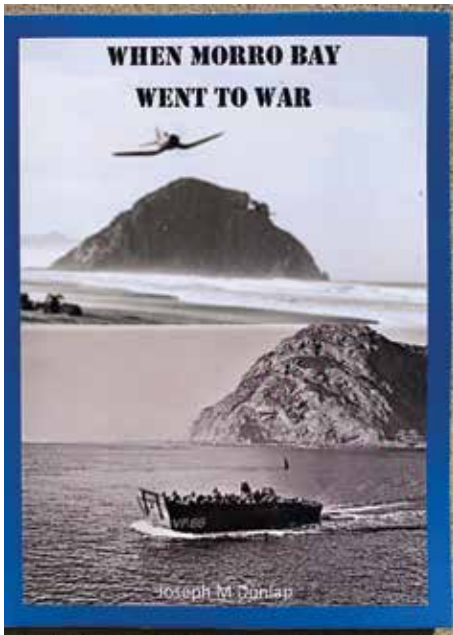
They are asking for high-resolution digital copies of photos — recent and from long ago — that local fisher families might have to help them build a tribute to the folks that helped build this town.

"Morro Bay's roots are connected directly to commercial fishing," Mather said, "and the fishermen who worked tirelessly in this industry. We want to honor their legacy." Call (805) 225-5044 to discuss possible donations.

The Maritime Museum is also planning another fundraiser barbecue drive-thru in January. Tognazinni's Dockside will have dinners of smoked chicken for \$15 and ribs for \$30, along with Kelsey See Canyon Vineyard's Viognier wine for \$20 a bottle. Call Bonnie Jones at (602) 526-4367 or Kendall Welch at (415) 307-3195 for tickets. Dinner pick-up will be from 5-6 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 19.

The Museum is open Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and has several great "maritime themed" gift items for Christmas. The plan is to have the gift merchandise outside the Museum's front door for safe shopping.

Among the items is a book chronicling Morro Bay's role as a World War II training base. For more information contact Bonnie Jones at (602) 526-4367.



This book is one of the maritime themed gifts for sale at the Morro Bay Maritime Museum.

Obituary

Thomas James Stickel 1961-2020



Long time Morro Bay commercial fisherman Thomas James Stickel passed away in Everett, Washington, on November 17, 2020, of cardiac arrest. He was 59.

Tom spent his childhood in San Luis Obispo and Atascadero, eventually landing in Morro Bay, where he was a member of the Morro Bay High School Class of 1979. At 17, Tom bought the first of his three commercial fishing boats, the Biby, upgrading from it to the Regina, and ultimately to his dreamboat, the Molle. Over the years, Tom predominately fished for rockfish, salmon and albacore, from border to border and out to about 200 miles offshore. Following back surgery, in 2013 he retired to Whidbey Island, to spend time with his family.

Tom is survived by his wife, Barbara Stickel, his parents, Barbara Halliday Fournier and Thomas Fournier, his sisters, Margaret (Peggy) Mitchell and Julie Schlageter, his niece, Jessica Cooks, his nephews, James Mitchell and Kevin Kinloch, and his great-niece, Kayla Cooks.

Preceded in death by his younger brother, Kenneth Schlageter.

A memorial bonfire was held in Washington State. Tom's ashes will be scattered in the Pacific Ocean, where he spent his happiest times.

Donations in Tom's memory may be made to The Pacific Coast Federation of Fisherman's Associations and/or the American Heart Association.

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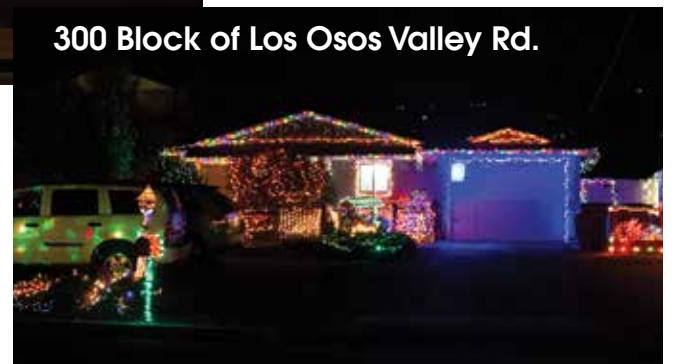
1600 Block of 11th St.



1700 Block of 17th St.



Sylvester's on Santa Ynez St.



300 Block of Los Osos Valley Rd.



1100 Block of Nipomo St.



1500 Block of 18th St.

GRINCH PUNCH

HAPPY HOLIDAYS! Enjoy this recipe compliments of Sandy Carino

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 .13oz packets Unsweetened Lemon-Lime Kool-Aid
- 2 Cups Sugar
- 1 12oz Can Pineapple Juice
- 1 12oz Frozen Lemonade Concentrate, thawed
- 1/2 liter of Sprite/cece
- Red Sanding Sugar for Glass Trim



INSTRUCTIONS:

Pour 2 quarts of water in a 1 gallon pitcher. Add the Kool-aid mix and sugar and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Add the pineapple juice and lemonade and stir well. To top the rim of a glass, dip the top in water then dip into the sanding sugar. Just before serving, add the Sprite and ice. Serve and Enjoy!



Looking for something safe and fun for the whole family or you and your housemates to participate in? Bundle up and take a tour of lights on the North Coast. Many homes and businesses are keeping the holiday spirit alive with twinkling lights, inflatable characters and festive décor.

Readers sent in addresses of shining examples and Estero Bay News chose a few favorites too.

We wish you all happy, healthy and peaceful holidays. We look forward to seeing you in 2021.



SANDY CARINO | BROKER ASSOCIATE
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News

New Lease From page 1

The Bike Park cost about \$30,000 to build, relatively cheap so far as public facilities go.

The Bike Park, located just north of Radcliffe Avenue on Main Street is free and open daily to the public. It is for BMX, mountain bikes, and any non-motorized bikes and is open to kids of all ages.

A parking lot on Little Morro Creek Road contains a sign listing the park's rules that include wearing helmets at all times.

In his report Collins notes that mountain bike riding is popular around the world and it stands to reason would be popular on the Central Coast, which has numerous mountain and coastal trails most notably in Montaña de Oro State Park, which has great fame as a mountain biking destination.

"It is no surprise then that the Morro Bay bike park has become an increasingly popular recreational opportunity for Morro Bay residents and visitors during its first five years," Collins said.

He added that CCCMB has been great partners on the park, "and have made numerous improvements to the track to coincide with the interests and desires of the biking community."

Community Plan From page 1

proach be taken when planning for new development to proceed."

Munds adds that the Basin Plan's intent is to reach sustainability for the people and businesses that are already there, not future growth.

In response to this, County spokeswoman Erika Schuetze said, "The Los Osos Community Plan [LOCP] requires new development to fund water conservation projects to offset their water demand and creates growth limits to ensure that new development in Los Osos does not exceed the available sustainable water supply from the groundwater basin."

The CSD's worried that an actual funding mechanism was not put in place, "that would assure new development pays its fair share of the costs to supply and deliver water to that development."

Schuetze said, "The County Building Code already requires new structures in Los Osos to fund water savings projects for existing development to offset their water demand at a 2:1 ratio to receive a building permit, resulting in a net decrease in water use community-wide. For example, to build a single-family residence, the owner needs to fund projects that save 300 gallons per day, such as replacing old, inefficient washing machines with new, efficient washing machines that use less water."

Normally, such a retrofit program would focus on toilets, but installation of water-saving fixtures was already done throughout the community as part of the sewer project.

Golden State Water is a private company that manages roughly half the customers in Los Osos. General manager, Mark Zimmer, wrote to the County as well. "Although much of the Basin Plan is focused on ensuring a sustainable and affordable water supply for existing users, the basin Plan also contemplates the requirements that need to be met before new development should be allowed to proceed within the Basin, including a completion of a Basin Infrastructure Program and satisfaction of identified Basin monitoring metrics."

Zimmer adds that the Basin Plan has four phases — Programs A through D — and their customers have paid for everything so far.

Among the main projects is to drill more wells on the eastern side of town, away from the seawater intrusion. Indeed, the CSD recently chose to drill a new well at the site of the old community septic system and leach field at Bayridge Estates. That project has a lot of environmental review work and permitting to go, as well as drilling test wells. It's proposed to be some 700 feet deep and was

the best choice of six the CSD looked at.

Zimmer said recent data shows the health of the groundwater basin is improving, but the various metrics they used to judge the health "have yet to show consistent improvement."

Schuetze noted that the County's plans do address growth limits. "The LOCP would extend the current building moratorium to the entire urban area, not just the sewer service area, until two additional expansion wells are constructed by the Los Osos water purveyors, which are intended to mitigate seawater intrusion. The wells are fully funded and expected to be completed within a few years."

The plans include exceptions to the moratorium, she explained. "Exceptions to the moratorium would include accessory dwelling units, affordable housing, conversion of second-story commercial space to residential use, permits in progress when the LOCP is adopted, and permits for parcels that already have water offset certificates when the LOCP is adopted. These exceptions would still need to meet the water offset requirement." That requirement was a 2:1 ratio of water savings.

The growth limit is 1.5%, she said, over 5 years. Such plans are supposed to be updated every 5 years but that deadline is rarely met. At that rate, there could be a total of 420 "new dwelling units," permitted according to Schuetze.

Then, a new growth rate would be set according to the available sustainable basin yield based on best available data.

"Based on average existing household water usage in Los Osos," Schuetze said, "the 420 new dwelling units would use about 63-acre feet per year (AFY) of water."

The County figures to save twice that in retrofits the new dwelling units would be required to meet. "The estimated water savings potential for additional conservation programs is 160-350 AFY," she said, "which is sufficient to meet the 2:1 offset requirement for the anticipated new development in Los Osos."

The plan updates also satisfy two special conditions that the Coastal Commission placed on the community sewer project, namely that "vacant parcels shall not connect to the sewer until the County updates the Los Osos Community Plan to incorporate a sustainable buildout target supported by the safe field of the groundwater basin, and prior to development of undeveloped lots, the County shall prepare and implement a Habitat Conservation Plan for long-term preservation of environmentally sensitive habitat areas and species throughout the community."

Among the elements of the Community Plan is a vision statement that was developed by the local advisory council; it calls for a community where urban development is contained within the existing urban reserve line; occurs at a controlled rate and is sustained by resources and services. That URL would be clearly defined by a greenbelt, "including productive agricultural lands and open space that are managed to protect the Morro Bay Estuary, including scenic and natural resources."

As for the Habitat Conservation Plan or HCP, the Community Plan calls for infill development within the URL, but the HAB is supposed to protect environmentally sensitive spots around town, setting up a mitigation system.

In essence the HAB sets the price for mitigating destruction of sensitive habitat on private property.

"Fees for new development are as follows: \$0.75 for Restoration/Management/Administration (per disturbed square foot) and \$0.14 for Habitat Protection (per disturbed square foot). The fees will be assessed by multiplying the area of ground disturbance in square feet by each of the fee types."

That money is supposed to fund buying lands to add to the greenbelt around town, or other conservation projects. That's why the plan doesn't map environmentally sensitive habitat areas within the URL, because they are subject to the mitigation formula.

Among the major land use changes is rezoning of an 8.5-acre parcel on Fairchild Way from commercial to residential multi-family.

Also, the 56-acre open area along Los Osos Valley Road between Broderon and Ramona Avenues, called Morro Shores Mixed-Use Area, will change from residential single family and residential multi-family to residential multi-family, residential single family.

The plans also has a "Public Facilities Financing Plan" with a list of infrastructure improvements needed in town — utilities, transportation infrastructure, streetscapes, parks and public facilities. The list tops \$69.6 million.

The plans also changed the official potential population at build out going from the current 28,688 to 18,000, a 30% decrease. That's because the new plan changes the mix of housing. Currently, Los Osos is 85% single-family homes.

"New development potential would be about 75% single-family, resulting in an overall mix of 79% single-family communitywide at build out."

That new build out would add 6,487 single family homes (versus 5,426 existing), and 1,695 multi-family (895 currently) for a total of 1,861 new dwelling units.

Diablo From page 1

\$209,000.

The County back in July budgeted a full year's salary, and since she didn't start work until nearly half way through the year, the County will save much of those salary and benefit costs.

Money for the position is coming out of Senate Bill 1090, a special law passed by the State Legislature that seeks to compensate the County, as well as the San Luis Coastal Unified School District and other agencies, for expected property tax revenue losses when Diablo Canyon permanently shuts down in 2025.

Her job will be to manage "the land use permitting aspects of the closure of the Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant," reads a report from Nov. 17. Supervisors actually created the job and the County sought applicants in November 2019, and three unsuccessful tries at recruiting someone followed.

"There have been several qualified candidates who applied for the position," reads a Nov. 17 report from Human Resources Director, Tami Douglas-Schatz. "Two offers were extended, and both offers were rejected by the candidates. It has been determined that the compensation for this position is not competitive for the role."

To make it work, Douglas-Schatz and Keith, proposed eliminating a planning division manager position in favor of the decommissioning manager's job, a new job classification.

"It is integral to the success of the program," the report said, "that the incumbent is aligned with the priorities and philosophies of the Board of Supervisors, County Administrative Officer, and Assistant County Administrative Officer."

"Said incumbent must quickly demonstrate the ability to meet expectations and deliver the intended results. Should the incumbent not be able to do so, the County needs the ability to quickly pivot and find a better suited candidate."

Someone under civil service protections couldn't be so easily swapped out. Being an at-will employee puts Strachan on the same level as the County Attorney, department heads, and County Administrative Officer.

For comparison, a division manager job pays \$123,000 a year, a difference of \$16,900 from what Strachan will make (\$140,000).

The SB 1090 monies would be replaced with a "Cost Accounting Agreement" with plant owner Pacific Gas & Electric that should be reached once PG&E files its decommissioning application with the County. Then a combination of the SB 1090 monies and planning fees would pay for the decommissioning manager position.

According to Douglas-Schatz, no matter what, they need this job filled. "If for any reason the development of the Cost Accounting Agreement with PG&E is delayed or cannot put in place," she said, "this position will still be needed until the plant is permanently closed, permitted for re-use, and any other related tasks required by law are completed."

Decommissioning Diablo Canyon, the last working nuclear plant in California, is anticipated to take decades and cost several billion dollars. During this time, the County is expected to entertain future uses for the enormous property that features coastal canyons, grasslands, dune scrub, coastal plateaus, and oak woodlands.

The plant site itself has many, non-nuclear buildings and facilities, including an enormous desalination plant, marine biology lab, and a sheltered, man-made harbor.

One drawback to future uses could be numerous giant so-called dry casks where many tons of radioactive spent fuel rods are stored on an enormous concrete slab located behind the plant's twin containment domes.



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Kevin says, "Look for the ANT on the Door"



KEVIN O'CONNOR, President

Adjusting From page 1



Laurie Niblock, celebrating her German roots during Oktoberfest, hopes to soon travel again.

AA degree in hospitality and travel, however, it was her earlier boot-camp training working for the infamous King Brothers that taught her the business. They made their money in slot machines, managing real estate, and movie production and at one time owned Air Siam with investor partners. She was the "... secretary to the boss until he was considered redundant. It was a small company and we had to learn to do all the jobs - bookings, cargo space management..."

That same boss later sought her out when he created his own travel company. A couple of their clients were Continental Airlines and a charter business that helped refugee Vietnamese and Cambodians flee their country when it was not safe for anyone who supported the U.S. Military.

Along her Southern California journey, Niblock had met and married her Charlie in 1973. "He was a kind, considerate person. Everybody loved his smile." They were married 47 years. They retired to Cayucos in 1989; 23 of those years she took care of him until he passed in 2018. And although he was in a wheelchair "... he could always get himself out of bed, enjoyed working out at FitnessWorks of Morro Bay and loved to travel."

How has she survived 2020? Coping skills and a love for the Cayucos community. She volunteers for numerous associations, but this year she and neighbors have come to depend on each other, particularly Lou and Sheryl Barbich and Lee and Allyn Arnold.

"I hope someday to travel again," said Niblock. Meanwhile, Cayucos organizations can share her with her "circle family." Cayucos is definitely home. "I like that it is a close-knit and low-key community of people who take care of each other."

She helped start the Cayucos Art Association and a constant volunteer for thirty years, including president its first two years. When Charlie needed her at home, her active participation with the Cayucos Seniors changed to producing their newsletter for 15 years. She's served on the Cayucos Advisory Council and been Cayucos Land Conservancy board secretary since 1999.

Letters to The Editor



Democratic Party Doesn't Accept Me

As someone who presents as a white male, I am no longer accepted or understood in the California Democratic Party. So last week, I had no other choice but to change my voter registration and leave the California Democratic Party, since my sex and skin color and my support for my family members in law enforcement became a problem with the new radical elements of a party I no longer recognize.

John Paul Drayer
Cayucos

Stop the Spread

As publishers of this widely read local paper, it was disheartening to see that you disregarded the most basic tenet of safety during this time of Covid 19: masks and social distancing.

By taking three group pictures of people standing next to one another - some with masks, some not, and no distancing whatsoever, you allowed them and those they come in contact with to dramatically increase exposure to the virus. It's possible that each of the individuals gave authorization to your paper and to each other to be photographed this way; however, I believe it was your responsibility not to take these pictures in the first place.

The virus has been affecting us for almost one year, and I think it's doubtful that these photos were taken before that time. You should know better and so should the folks in the pictures.

Susan Fitzgerald
Morro Bay

Cambria Healthcare District Seeking Donations

The Cambria Community Healthcare District (CCHD) has been providing much-needed healthcare services to residents and visitors in our local community since 1947. It is our mission to provide health-related assistance to every individual living in or visiting our community - an 800+ square-mile area extending from Villa Creek Road in the south, up to the Monterey County line in the north and to the crest of Highway 46 in the east. We currently provide 911 emergency medical response as the primary Advanced Life Support ambulance service for this substantial area.

With the recent challenges faced during the pandemic, the importance of this service is all the more critical. In addition to sustaining the ambulance service, we also have a responsibility to the community to solicit needed healthcare assets such as primary physician care and wellness programs. There are efforts underway to accomplish these. You can view our mission statement and review our initiatives at www.cambria-healthcare.org.

In order to help us fulfill our mission, kindly consider making

a tax-deductible donation to the Cambria Community Healthcare District Trust - an IRS 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All monies raised will be 100% used for capital-type investments to improve our ability to serve this community now and for many years to come. With your help we can better serve those who live, work and play here.

Recently, the Cambria Community Council funded a grant request made by the CCHD Trust for a used ambulance, which will be in service for many years.

To facilitate a convenient platform for tax-deductible donations we have set up a link that allows for a direct donation to our CCHD Trust account using credit cards as well as e-checks: <https://secure.qgiv.com/for/cchd/>.

Any amount is appreciated and will be put to good use. Each contributor will receive a receipt for tax purposes.

Mike McDonough
Administrator - Cambria Community Healthcare District

Professional Weather Reporting

In 1982, just before my junior year of high school in Visalia, California I was given a used six-band radio manufactured from Radio Shack, that used to have the National Weather Service NOAA Weather Radio on it to tune in the frequencies from 162.400 to 162.550 MHz. I used to watch a PBS program called A.M. Weather from Maryland Public Television with the three meteorologists from 1981 until 1993, just before I went to high school for 15 minutes.

Today, I am the owner of the Cheshire Weather Bureau Administrative Headquarters, Weather Station Office and Service in Morro Bay since I went public in the year of 1988, in Visalia. I have a Davis Vantage Vue (#6250) wireless weather station and console with a USB cable and data logger that connects my personal computer. I have a group on Facebook, with the web address of <https://www.facebook.com/groups/671430842874955>, and I want to be recognized that this hobby of mine, which can be work related, is a spiritual gift from God as a "unique" service that I do operate. In closing if you want a professional weather report, turn to me and get it on my FB group, please.

Scott C. Presnal
Morro Bay,

Jim Marshall

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Los Osos Cares in partnership with Dignity Health Community Services is launching a new program to assist the needs of our Estero Bay Communities seniors.

- We will be accepting phone calls from seniors to see if they need services or resources.
- Connect them to resources which can provide services from our roster of partner agencies and organizations.

We hope that this will bring hope to those sheltered at home during this pandemic and a connection to our isolated seniors.

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“The Gift of Health”



Leon
VanBeurden
805-801-1133
DRE# 00646313



Kathy
Van Beurden
DRE# 00683117



Simon
Van Beurden
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