

## New Leaseholders Group Formed

Story & Photo By Neil Farrell



A project to turn the second floor of Rose's Landing into motel rooms triggered an expansion of the Harborwalk on the lease site, which as seen here, turned into a huge job with new pilings, I-beams and decking, plus a new seawall (not shown in the picture). A new business group has formed consisting of master leaseholders on The Embarcadero to address such issues.

A group of business people with vested interests in Morro Bay's Embarcadero, have formed a new organization to address issues on the waterfront and look out for their interests.

Called the "Embarcadero Master Lease Holders, LLC," the group consists of master leaseholders of tideland's trust properties at such places as Dutchman's Landing, Morro Bay Landing and the Harbor Center, among others.

Formed last June, the EMLH takes up where its predecessor, the Embarcadero Merchants Association, left off years ago when it went inactive.

That organization formed some 30 years ago, said Paul Van Beurden, the EMLH groups' president and master leaseholder at Dutchman's Landing, as well as the owner of Dutchman's Seafood House restaurant. The difference, he added, is the old group was more of a marketing organization. This new one is just the master leaseholders and was formed to represent them with the City on policies that

effect them.

Morro Bay's tidelands trust properties are for the most part the properties on the west side of the Embarcadero. Such lots are owned by the State and administered by the City under an agreement that goes back to the 1960s.

The City owns and leases out the land and adjacent water areas, collecting rents to support the Harbor Department, but it's the leaseholders that have invested, in many cases millions of dollars, and keep the economy running.

Van Beurden said the members had been talking about needing a unified voice for the past few years. "We saw issues coming up that we needed to take a look at." Among those was the City's rewrite of its master lease policy, the governing document that serves as the basis for future lease negotiations.

Board Secretary-Treasurer, Bob Fowler, who completed a total rebuild of Morro Bay Landing (formerly Virg's

**Leaseholders** Continued on page 14

## A Call to Save Christmas



A blast from the past Christmas display. Let's do the whole North Coast in lights and spirit this year.

Local holiday celebrations, like everything else in 2020, have been canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic response.

From lighting the City Christmas Tree in Morro Bay and the Lighted Boat Parade; to the Los Osos Christmas Parade and the big homeless fundraiser gift sale; the Cambria Christmas Market; and now, even Cayucos' Carlin Soule Polar Bear Dip on New Year's Day; they are all canceled.

The annual free, public Thanksgiving Dinners were served via drive-thru and delivery this year, which threw a wet blanket over the start of the Holiday Season, yet was still a time for grateful reflections on the blessings of life, family and loved ones.

The Morro Bay Caroling Cops and Christmas Trolley Parade will happen, Monday-Wednesday, Dec. 7-9, in what could be one of two local appearance by Santa Claus this year.

For another chance to see the big man in red, 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 includes a pancake breakfast and a chance to visit with Santa Claus. You must pre-register with the rec department by Dec. 18, go online to: [apm.active-](https://apm.active.com/)

**Save Christmas** Continued on page 14

## Morro Bay in Bloom Celebrates a 7th Anniversary

- Another Covid-19 Survival Story

By Judy Salamacha



Morro Bay In Bloom recently celebrated its 7th Anniversary – virtually. Members have traditionally assembled at the home of Walter and Jane Heath, for their founder, project designer and nonprofit manager to thank his fellow gardeners for showing up whenever they could on a Saturday for two hours with one purpose in mind, plucking weeds and planting seasonal flowers for bursts of reds, oranges, yellows,

pinks, blues, and purples to "green" our city's urban landscape.

This columnist's fuzzy math skills indicate that since MBIB was established October 25, 2013, members have dedicated approximately 364 Saturdays - 728 hours each of personal weekend time to join fourteen member gardeners who collectively have generated about 8,736 hours to deliberately get their hands dirty. Indeed,

**Morro Bay in Bloom** Continued on page 15

## Council Grants Support to Affordable Apartment Project

By Neil Farrell



Artist rendering is of the Morro Bay Family Apartments, a 35-unit affordable housing project to be built on a vacant lot at 405 Atascadero Rd., in Morro Bay by the San Luis Obispo Non-Profit Housing Corporation.

The Morro Bay City Council on Nov. 12 continued its support of a proposed affordable housing project on Atascadero Road, granting its entire 2021 Community Block Grant award, plus a spill over from last year to the single applicant.

The City is expected to this year get \$59,800 from the County, which administers the federal CDBG program. The County takes \$57,782 for administrative costs, leaving \$52,018 in the current fund-

ing available to the City.

Add in another \$41,880 rolled over from the previous cycle and the City had \$89,766 and program administration of \$4,190 for a total funding allocation of \$93,956.

And that all went to San Luis Obispo Non-Profit Housing Corporation's "Morro Bay Family Apartments" project at 405 Atascadero Rd., a 35-unit apartment complex with a mix of one, two and three

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Colorful  
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# County to Support State Water Tunnel

By Neil Farrell

San Luis Obispo County, while only receiving a small portion of its State Water Project allotment, will pay into the State's efforts to build the infamous Delta Tunnels Project.

Acting as the board of the County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, County Supervisors approved paying \$750,000 to the State Department of Water Resources (DWR) for "preliminary and design costs related to a potential Delta Conveyance Project," reads a staff report from the Nov. 17 meeting.

California taxpayers have been paying into the project through their property taxes since the 1960s and continue to do so today. SLO County entered into a contract with DWR for State Water in 1963 and subscribed to 25,000 acre feet of water a year.

The infrastructure to deliver state water south all the way to Los Angeles via the California Aqueduct was built in the 1960s and 70s but stubbed out at the Kern County line at a place called "Devil's Den."

In the 1990s, DWR devised the "Coastal Branch of the State Water Project" a pipeline that runs from a new treatment plant at Polonio Pass (off Hwy 41 west of Kettleman City) and runs down to Santa Barbara County.

Eleven SLO County water agencies signed up to receive water from the pipeline, including Morro Bay, which signed on for 1,313 acre feet a year (AFY).

Later, the City bought a "drought buffer allotment" of another 1,313 AFY. This drought buffer means that the SWP has to drop below 50% deliveries in a given year before Morro Bay loses any of its allocation.

Overall, SLO County agencies subscribed for 4,830 AFY, referred to as the "Water Service Amount" or WSA. Throw in more drought buffer and all the agencies in SLO County are signed on for 5,707 AFY of fully treated, ready-to-drink water.

But the SWP, while bringing life-giving water to the Southland from Northern California where it is usually plentiful, has taken a heavy toll on the ecology of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, where several major rivers come together to then flow to the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean.

The State has been trying to solve these environmental issues since about 2005 and for many years then-Gov. Jerry Brown was pushing a project that would have built two massive tunnels under the delta to bypass certain SWP facilities that were killing too many salmon fingerlings and delta smelt, among other issues.

But current Gov. Gavin Newsome cut Brown's 2-tunnel system to a 1-tunnel scheme.

"DWR is currently working on defining a proposed single tunnel project," reads the County report, "which is being referred to as the 'Delta Conveyance [Facilities] Project' or DCP. The DCP's overarching objective is to protect the SWPs ability to continue to deliver water south of the Delta.

"Additional objectives include making the SWP more resilient to the impacts of changing and extreme weather events; minimizing the potential public health and safety impacts from reduced quantity and quality of water caused by earthquakes; and providing SWP operational flexibility to improve aquatic conditions and better manage risks of additional future regulatory constraints on project operations."

What's in it for SLO County? "Locally," the County report said, "participation in the DCP would result in deliveries estimated to be about 12% more reliable, on average. The District's investment in State Water would be better protected from sea level rise and levee failure due to seismic events in the Delta Region.

"Finally, participation in the DCP could play a role in advancing local water projects by increasing the value of the unsubscribed allocation when it is exchanged or transferred via the Water Management Tools. This revenue could be

reinvested in local water projects.

"As an example, the District participated in two water transfer programs led by DWR during periods of drought, netting \$6.36 million."

Design work on the tunnel plan is expected to take four years and the \$750,000 represents just the first two years. The overall cost to the Flood Control District is pegged at \$2 million.

The County Public Works Department plans to return to the Supervisors in 2022 to see about funding the other two years.

How much the actual construction of the underground tunnels is going to cost is unknown, but expected in the tens of billions. It should be noted that the Metropolitan Water District in Southern California has offered to pay most of the costs of the project in order to ensure drinking water continues to flow to the 25 million people who rely on it.

It remains to be seen if there is enough political will in the State Legislature to actually construct the tunnel project.

# Ban Extended on Human Wastes as Fertilizer

By Neil Farrell

San Luis Obispo County has extended once more a moratorium on spreading human "biosolids" on agricultural fields, the fourth time the temporary moratorium has been extended.

Chapter 8.13 of the San Luis Obispo County Code-book established an interim moratorium on the land application of treated sewage sludge or "biosolids" and was first entered into the books in 2004 and has been extended repeatedly since.

The last extension was due to expire at the end of next March (2021) and with this new extension, it's now good until March 31, 2026, some 5 years, unless a permanent ordinance is approved to replace it.

But there's not a lot of hope in that happening, as the County's original draft ordinance got bogged down in 2015, when it was determined that the environmental impact report would cost \$200,000 and not one of the local cities or sanitary districts was interested in pitching in, as such an ordinance would greatly affect how they dispose of biosolids from their treatment plants.

It's a complex issue that frankly smells bad no matter what gets proposed.

In 1998, a proposal to spread treated sewage sludge on fields in San Miguel triggered action by the County Health Commission, followed a couple of years later by the formation of a Board of Supervisor's Task Force and the eventual drafting of an ordinance in 2014.

The issue boils down to whether the components contained in wastewater treatment plant byproducts are safe to use for fertilizer, the way farmers use cow manure and chicken guano to replenish and amend the soil?

With little guidance from the State or Federal governments covering the matter, the County's efforts have gone through a series of leaps and stumbles, so far as getting a permanent ordinance passed, a folly aped somewhat by the State's efforts at the same nagging issue.

On one hand, biosolids recycling is in keeping with some of the State's tenets of ecology — i.e. using natural materials instead of chemical fertilizers — as well as requiring a high level of sludge and thus encouraging the highest level of treatment.

It's much cheaper to sell or even give away sludge to local farmers to use locally than to truck it to a biohazard facility. Sludge application on land was common practice here until the 1998 San Miguel project awakening.

Some plants, including the Morro Bay-Cayucos plant in the past, compost their sludge, mixing it with organic materials like plant and tree cuttings from parks, grinding them up together and selling or giving it away to the public.

The Morro Bay plant no longer does this and instead pays to have its sludge hauled away. The new Cayucos plant

will too, sending it to the local landfills as cover material.

The County's temp ordinance allows land application of sludge if it's within "historical amounts of Exceptional Quality biosolids" a designation that's almost impossible to meet with the current sewage plants in operation. Still, the Morro Bay-Cayucos plant normally produces a high quality of sludge but it isn't "exceptional."

"Since enactment of Chapter 8.13 in 2004," a County Health Agency staff report said, "there has been no land application projects submitted" to County Environmental Health, the agency that enforces the ordinance.

But there is also now growing concerns about other components in the waste stream, in particular the stuff that makes your eggs slide right off the pan at breakfast.

As of this past July, all publicly owned treatment works or wastewater treatment plants statewide are required to "test for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances [PFAS] as they are potentially significant receivers of these substances and, in turn, may be potential dischargers via biosolids," reads the County report. "According to the CDC, PFAS are a group of chemicals used to make fluoropolymer coatings and products that resist heat, oil, stains, grease, and water.

"Fluoropolymer coatings can be used in such varied products as clothing, furniture, adhesives, food packaging, heat-resistant non-stick cooking surfaces, and the insulation of electrical wire. Many chemicals in this group, including perfluorooctane sulfonic acid and perfluorooctanoic acid, have been a concern because they do not break down in the environment, can move through soils and contaminate drinking water sources, and they build up in fish and wildlife."

As SLO County is so heavily reliant on groundwater for drinking water, this potential pollutant is of particular concern and the staff's recommendation is to wait to see what a State Water Resources Control Board study concludes on the issue. "The SWRCB has indicated that they plan to consider updating the State General Order standards for land application of biosolids," said the County report.

But the moratorium doesn't mean human wastes are not available for your home garden. "Consistent with the availability of commercially bagged composted biosolids," reads the County report, "the ordinance exempts the land application of biosolids used in compost. Composted biosolids in 40-pound bags are currently available at most retail nurseries and large hardware stores with nursery sections.

"This composted material is comprised of biosolids



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mixed with green waste and can be applied by anyone without regulatory oversight. State law requires that laboratory tests be conducted on composted biosolids to demonstrate the material to be significantly below the Federal 503 Regulation limits, including levels for heavy metals.”

## Final Election Results Released

By Neil Farrell

The final count on the November Election has been done in San Luis Obispo County, and there were no changes in local races during what appears to be a record turnout.

SLO County posted an 88.35% turnout as 162,615 people out of 184,050 registered voters cast a ballot, according to the County Clerk-Recorder’s Office, which is in charge of elections in SLO County.

And in California’s grand experiment with universal mail-in balloting, brought on by fears of the Coronavirus Pandemic, saw SLO County cast 152,741 vote-by-mail ballots.

Only 9,874 voted at the polls, which were greatly reduced in number, though open over a 4-day election period (Oct. 31-Nov. 3) as opposed to the normal single day of voting.

SLO County went for Joe Biden-Kamala Harris in the Presidential race, scoring 52.29% (88,310 votes) to President Donald Trump and Vice-President Mike Pence’s 42.22% (67,436).

Democrat Congressman Salud Carbajal topped Republican challenger Andy Caldwell, 53.62% (84,608) to 46.38% (73,172) in the 24th Congressional District. Overall in the district, which also includes Santa Barbara and Coastal Ventura Counties, Carbajal got 212,563 votes (58.7%) and Caldwell 146,780 (41.3%).

SLO County also went for Democrat John Laird in the 17th District State Senate race, giving the Santa Cruz career politician 52.49% (81,001) to challenger Vicki Nohdren’s 47.51% (73,327).

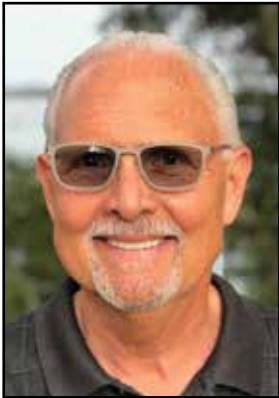
Overall in the 17th District, Laird took 64.7% (319,750) to Nohdren’s 35.3% (174,452), according to the Secretary of State’s Election website, see: <https://election-results.sos.ca.gov/returns>.

The 17th District includes SLO, Monterey, Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties.

In the race for the 35th State Assembly District, Republican incumbent Jordan Cunningham carried SLO County with 54.7% (85,530) to Democrat challenger and Morro Bay Councilwoman, Dawn Addis’ 45.4% (70,830).

Cunningham carried the overall district, winning re-election with 55.1% (126,579) to Addis’ 44.9%

(103,206). The 35th District includes SLO and Santa Barbara Counties.



John Headding



Laurel Barton



Robert Davis

In the Morro Bay Mayor’s race, in a rematch from the 2018 election, Mayor John Headding prevailed over challenger John Weiss in one of the closest races in all of SLO County, 50.83% (3,476) to 49.17% (3,362), a mere 114 vote difference.

In the race for two council seats, incumbent Robert Davis came in first out of four candidates, taking 27.57% (3,197). Second place went to Laurel Barton with 26.74% (3,100) filling the open seat formerly held by Marlys McPherson, who didn’t run for re-election.

Also-rans were former 2-term Councilwoman Betty Winholtz (23.29%, 2,700) and Richard Sadowski (22.4%, 2,597).

Cambria CSD winners were Harry Farmer (30.02%, 2,529), Karen Dean (27.28%, 2,298) and Tom Gray (22.56%, 1,901). David Pearson finished out of the money with 20.14% and 1,697 votes.

Cecilia Ann Lomeli (47.08%, 2,895) and Cecilia Montalvo (27.08%, 1,665) were elected to the Cambria

Community Healthcare District board, beating out Kristi Jenkins (25.84%, 1,589).

In the Cayucos Sanitary District, Hannah Miller (43.75%, 1,128) and Bob Enns (40.92%, 1,055) were re-elected. Also, John Drayer got 15.32% and 395 votes.

Morro Bay’s Measure E-20, a 1-percent sales tax hike, was approved by voters with 58.55% (4,113) in favor and 41.45% (2,912) against. So the City’s local sales tax rate will go from one-half percent to 1.5% (plus the State’s 7.25% for a total sales tax in Morro Bay of 8.75%).

As a general fund tax, Measure E-20 needed just 50%-plus-one vote to pass. Had it been for a specific purpose, for example road repairs, it would have needed two-thirds majority (66%) for approval.

City Manager Scott Collins said the new tax would kick in April Fool’s Day and the revenues start to be realized with the 2021-22 City budget starting July 1, 2021. The City claimed it would raise up to \$2 million a year, given a normal economy.

In the case of an Atascadero school bond, Measure C-20, for \$40 million, the measure needed 55% under State Law. C-20 came up short, garnering 54.45% according to the County Elections Office.

However, Measure D-20, a 1% sales tax hike put up by the City of Atascadero passed easily with 58.6%.

Sales tax hikes were also approved in San Luis Obispo and Grover Beach. And voters in Pismo Beach approved a hike in the transient occupancy taxes, from 10% to 11%, expected to raise \$1 million a year and be paid by tourists.

## Los Osos Landfill Cleanup Jumps \$151,000; Now Tops \$1.8M

By Neil Farrell

Construction costs to clean up groundwater leaching from under a long-closed landfill in Los Osos keep oozing up higher and now top \$1.8 million for the overall project.

County Supervisors approved a third contract amendment for \$151,000 with the Jensen Drilling Company for the “Groundwater Extraction and Treatment System, Los Osos Landfill Project,” which entails the cleanup and monitoring of the groundwater leaching from under the Los Osos Landfill, which closed in the early 1990s after decades in operation.

In 1995, the County, which assumed responsibility for the landfill from the original owners, was ordered by the

Los Osos Landfill Continued on page 4



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# News

**Los Osos Landfill** From page 3

Regional Water Quality Control Board to clean up contaminated groundwater down gradient of the landfill (Order #95-66) off Turri Road.

But after decades of slow movement, the water board cracked down. “The RWQCB,” reads a County Public Works report, “is dissatisfied with progress of cleanup and is requiring more corrective action to further remediate the groundwater impacted by the Landfill, which is being addressed by constructing this groundwater extraction and treatment system.

“Advancing corrective actions to remove groundwater contamination are required to continue until volatile organic compounds [VOC] concentrations are reduced to background levels, which in this case is non-detect (zero). At a minimum, we must complete the project, and start-up operation, testing and 12 months of reporting to show progress in complying with the RWQCB order.”

The water board reportedly said it would ease up on the throttle after the extraction system is up and running for a full year and the County has a full year of data on the groundwater, according to the report.

Jensen Drilling’s contract was originally for \$777,000 to install several monitoring wells and cleanup equipment. There have been two previous change orders plus this recent third one and the contract is now up to \$934,193.

The County anticipates there’ll be another change order for an additional \$15,120 and so now estimates the final construction contract will top \$949,300.

So what happened with the extraction system, which has already been installed? The County said, “During testing it was found that the groundwater flow rate to the wells is much higher than anticipated. As a result, the existing air compressor system does not have the capacity to adequately run the pneumatic wells.

“A new, upgraded air compressor system and associated electrical modifications are necessary to sufficiently power the wells to meet the Regional Water Quality Control Board permit requirements.”

The \$151,000 change order reimbursed the contractor

for the new equipment and its installation.

And it won’t end with the fulfillment of the water board’s cleanup order, as the County anticipates it could have to go on monitoring the old dump indefinitely.

“Until regulatory compliance is achieved,” the County said, “ongoing corrective actions will continue to be an unavoidable cost to the County. To reduce cost impacts, staff is researching and reviewing specific grant opportunities for supporting ongoing operation, monitoring and maintenance of groundwater remediation programs.”

## MBPD Gets E-bikes



There will be more cops pedaling around town after the Morro Bay Police Department has added to its fleet of 2-wheeled patrol vehicles.

MBPD announced it has purchased two, new-fangled “E-bikes” to bring its fleet of bicycle patrol vehicles to four and beef up its Bike Patrol Team. “Electric bicycles or ‘e-bikes,’” reads a notice in the City Manager’s November 2020 Update newsletter, “allow officers to utilize bicycles to engage with the community while maintaining the ability to respond to emergency calls within the city without experiencing extreme fatigue officers experience riding standard bikes.”

E-bikes, or electric-assist bikes, which are quickly gaining popularity with rental outfits popping up in town, have an electric motor drive that assists riders on hilly streets and can increase speeds.

With all the hills in Morro Bay, an e-bike is probably a good thing for police bike patrols. “This creates a larger area of patrol coverage and more community engagement,” the report said. “The community will be seeing much more patrol bike details in the near future.”

The e-bikes are not the department’s first foray into electric vehicles. They have had two, electric motorcycles on patrol for several years.

Pictured here are the MBPD Bike Patrol Team and their patrol bikes.

And in other MBPD news, the department’s anticipated “Neighborhood Cop Program” got started in October.

The program divides the city into zones and assigns a police officer to each zone, to become a familiar and trusted face to the neighborhood with officers reaching out to the residents in their zone making introductions and getting familiar with the people under their watch.

“The Police department has utilized department social media, news media, and informational mailers to advertise the new community program and mobile app, and officers are hard at work reaching out to the residents in their sectors to introduce themselves.”

The program is aimed at specific types of nagging issues. “Projects related to noise complaints, parking problems, and other quality of life concerns have been identified and officers are working closely with residents to address the issues.”



## Morro Bay Community Thanksgiving Dinner



The Morro Bay Lions Club thanks the volunteers, businesses and organizations that made the Community Thanksgiving Dinner an overwhelming success. You made possible some 200 home delivery meals and over 350 drive-up and walk-up meals.

The Lions Club thanks the following **Businesses & Organizations** for their contributions & support: The City of Morro Bay, The MB Chamber of Commerce, The MB Maritime Museum, MB Police & Volunteer Officers, Casa de Flores, Edna’s Bakery, The Bouy, Dorn’s Cafe, Spencer’s Market, Mission Linen, AGP Video, Rock Harbor Church, St. Timothy’s Church, St. Peter’s Church and Boy Scout Troop #214.

The Lions Club thanks the following **Volunteers** for their dedication to serving others and for many hours of service in procuring, preparing and serving Thanksgiving meals: Gail & Dave Hubbard, Carla & Leonard Cicerello, Craig & Sue Gossard, Don Fischer, Sue Porter, Char & Cal Nishinaka, Jamie & Bill Todd, Judy Ann & Terry Cross, Donna & Chuck Stoll, Scott Padalino, Linda, Sarah & Paul Winters, Joe Birney, Larry Rosen, Wanda Robertson, Dale Johnson, Debra Fisher, Ken Vesterfelt, Patricia Daley Larry Padalino, Dony Peluca, Bill Mangan, Linda Fidell, Steve Yarling, Mark Menter, Sean McBride, Armando Garcia, Nancy Castle, Bill Pierce, Sue Shields, Donna Anderson, Wayne Musgrave, Jill Garman, Lori French, Lindsay & Matt Ashton, Jackie King, Dean Hileman, Noah King-Wilcox, Ross Padalino, Sue Johnson, Jon & Patrice Wordsworth, John & Linda Romero, Ray & Nancy McKelvey & Bev Marrion.



*Special thanks to Craig Gossard, Chuck Stoll and Nancy Castle for coordinating this community event.*





More Change Orders; WRF Costs Jump Again

By Neil Farrell

The Morro Bay City Council approved another slug of change orders for its Water Reclamation Facility sewer treatment plant, pushing the WRF over the \$75 million mark. On Nov. 17, at an unusual special Thursday meeting, the Council voted to approve a dozen change orders for some \$835,000 that included the bill for a massive landslide at the WRF construction site last May.

It's the fourth set of so-called "project change orders" or PCOs on the WRF portion of the project and pushed the treatment plant job to over \$75.7 million.

The original contract with Filanc/Black & Veatch, with a "guaranteed maximum price," was \$67.2 million. But before construction started last March, the costs had already risen by over \$1M due mainly to project delays caused when federal agencies clashed in Summer 2019 over the environmental impact report's handling of habitat loss for the protected red-legged frog. The WRF site sits in the midst of critical frog habitat.

Three previous sets of PCOs raised the costs \$1.6M, \$63,000, and \$5.99M respectively. But residents and businesses shouldn't worry.

City Manager, Scott Collins told Estero Bay News, "The cost is covered by contingency for the facility component of the project and won't impact water and sewer rates."

The two biggest PCOs involved bureaucracy and Mother Nature. A PCO for \$254,000 was attributed to delays in getting a permit from the State Department of Fish & Wildlife. The City worked with DFW regarding an "erosional feature" on the site and it wasn't until this past June that DFW came up with a streambed alteration permit.

A City report said, "The DB [Design-Build] team was prevented from accessing the erosional feature area of the site for several months. Through close coordination with the City and WRF Program Manager, significant changes to the construction sequencing was made resulting in additional work (i.e., second handling of material, etc.)."

The City in essence was able to cut the PCO down from an estimate of over \$1M.

The bill for a May landslide on the site has finally come due, as well. The slip, initially estimated at costing \$350,000, was negotiated down to \$280,000. The City got hit with the bill because its geologic consultant Earth Systems failed to discover and warn of the landslide, which it was determined was an ancient slip that started moving again after the grading work undercut the hill.

"After two separate geotechnical analyses," reads the City's report, "it was determined that the soil slip likely



This bird's-eye photo taken by a drone shows the Morro Bay Water Reclamation Facility construction site and the huge amount of fill dirt — some 20 feet deep — that has been bulldozed from the hillside and spread out over the plant site, with nearly 20-feet more remaining to be graded onto the site. Photo courtesy City of Morro Bay

occurred due to the presence of an ancient land slide and is being categorized as a pre-existing condition."

But even if the contractor knew about the ancient landslide in advance, the same thing would have had to be done with the materials, essentially spreading it out as part of the 40-feet of fill that will go on the site.

The third largest PCO, at \$108,000 was for "standardizing equipment [controls in this case] across the WRF."

Other PCOs varied in cost and scope and importance. For example, PCO No. 75 was for \$11,709 to add a window. "In line with other City facilities including City Hall and Public Works, a security window is being added at the Administration Building to improve staff safety."

In another rather odd PCO, electric car charging receptacles were added at a cost of \$42,000. "Electrical receptacles were not specifically noted in the RFP and are necessary at the parking canopies to accommodate battery chargers, etc. for City vehicles," reads the explanation for the change order.

Though the WRF's costs continue to climb, including the recent awarding of a contract for the conveyance system that was \$7M above the engineer's estimate, those extra costs too are not expected to lead to rate changes.

"There may be a few other change orders left," Collins said, "but we expect those to be minor. Most of the work where you'd run into needed changes [design, ground work, equipment purchases] is complete for the facility."

The latest PCOs reduced the contingency for the WRF from \$1.44M to \$614,000. But thanks to the low interest rate, 0.83%, the City got for its federal loan, "This increase in the GMP [guaranteed maximum price] does not affect user rates due to the historically low interest rate received on the EPA WIFIA loan."

So the current water/sewer rates of \$191 a month for an average residential customer including a \$41 a month WRF surcharge — are still holding, but the conveyance system hasn't yet turned a shovel full of dirt.

And with the trenching slated to go right through known Native American archaeological sites, PCOs, cost increases and delays could be significant.

COVID Curfew Ordered, More Restrictions Possible

By Neil Farrell

Cases of COVID-19 continue to rise and further restrictions could be coming. As of November 30 hospitalizations and ICU cases are up dramatically in the State. In Southern California, ICU beds are about 75% occupied — projections show them reaching or exceeding capacity by Dec. 24, although local hospital and ICU capacity remains good, according to District 2 Supervisor Bruce Gibson.

During a press conference on Monday Governor Gavin Newsom said he is considering reinstating a stay at home order for most counties throughout the state in the Purple Tier. SLO County is one of the 51 of California's 58 counties in the most restrictive ranking.

"As a result," Gibson said on social media, "I understand the state is considering significant actions — whether those actions will be adjusted to fit local conditions are a big concern of counties all over the state."

Curfew Ordered

Citing an "unprecedented, rapid rise" in COVID-19 cases, California's Acting State Public Health Officer, Dr. Erica Pan of the California Department of Public Health put nearly the entire state under a nighttime curfew limiting people's movements from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. every day for a month.

Dr. Pan issued her edict Nov. 19, terming it a "limited Stay at Home Order."

"As the State Public Health Officer," Dr. Pan said in a news release, "I am issuing a Limited Stay at Home order, effective in counties under Tier One [Purple] of California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy, requiring that all gatherings with members of other households and all activities conducted outside the residence, lodging, or temporary accommodation with members of other households cease between 10 p.m. Pacific standard time [PST] and 5 a.m. PST, except for those activities associated with the operation, maintenance, or usage of critical infrastructure or required by law.

"This order does not apply to persons experiencing homelessness. Nothing in this order prevents any number of persons from the same household from leaving their residence, lodging, or temporary accommodation, as long as they do not engage in any interaction with [or otherwise gather with] any number of persons from any other household, except as specifically permitted herein."

Curfew Ends Dec. 21

The curfew went into effect Nov. 21 and runs through Dec. 21 and is in effect so long as a county is in the State's Tier One — Purple lockdowns.

"The virus," Gov. Newsom said, "is spreading at a pace we haven't seen since the start of this pandemic and the next several days and weeks will be critical to stop the surge. We are sounding the alarm. It is crucial that we act to decrease transmission and slow hospitalizations before the death count surges. We've done it before and we must do it again."

Governor Quarantined

Gov. Newsom was in quarantine himself after he claimed his children were exposed to a highway patrol officer who tested positive for COVID-19.

The CHP provides personal protection for the State's First Family.

This came just a few days after Newsom, his family and numerous others were filmed having a big dinner party at the French Laundry restaurant in Napa, while breaking all of the pandemic orders and restrictions on mask wearing and social distancing that he's instituted on everyone in the state.

Though Newsom apologized, his scofflaw attitude of the rules has landed him in hot water, even as a petition drive to recall and remove him from office gains momentum.

On Nov. 23, Gov. Newsom and the State Health Department placed 94% of the state's population under the Purple Tier, which has the strictest restrictions of the four categories under the "Blueprint for a Safer Economy."

Curfew Continued on page 6

Grants-in-Aid Applications in SLO Being Accepted

For folks working in the City of San Luis Obispo, the Human Relations Commission Grants-in-Aid (GIA) Program is now available online. The program provides financial support to local non-profit organizations that promote the economic and social wellbeing of its citizens.

Applicants applying for 2021-22 GIA funding must be in alignment with adopted funding priorities. The main funding priority is: homeless prevention including, affordable and alternative housing, support services, and transitional housing.

The following additional priority funding areas are not listed in order of importance:

- Hunger and malnutrition prevention
- Supportive physical and mental health services for those in need
- Services for seniors and/or people with disabilities

in need

- Supportive developmental services for children and youth in need
- Services encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusivity in marginalized communities

The application can be accessed online, via the following link: <http://www.slocity.org/how-do-i-/apply-for/hrc-grants-in-aid>.

Completed applications are due no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, January 29, 2021. Final applications must be submitted both electronically and in a hard copy format; all instructions can be found in the first three pages of the grant application.

For questions, contact Cara Vereschagin, Housing Coordinator, at [cveresch@slocity.org](mailto:cveresch@slocity.org) or at (805) 781-7596.



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Curfew From page 5

The curfew applies to San Luis Obispo County, which dropped into the Purple Tier after its case numbers jumped since the start of November.

Facemasks Ordered Worn

With this stepped-up campaign to fight the virus, the State is also ordering everyone to wear a facemask, “when- ever outside their homes.”

California, Oregon and Washington, also issued travel advisories, requiring anyone who enters their three states to “self-quarantine” to slow the spread of the virus.

This travel ban coincided with guidelines being issued for how to celebrate Thanksgiving that discouraged gath- ering with anyone outside the immediate household on the day traditionally celebrated by gathering with family and loved ones to give thanks and share a hearty meal.

Dr. Pan acknowledged the difficult changes they were asking of free people. “We are asking Californians to change their personal behaviors to stop the surge,” she said. “We must be strong together and make tough decisions to stay socially connected but physically distanced during this critical time. Letting our guard down could put thousands of lives in danger and cripple our health care system.”

SLO’s Numbers Moderate

Though San Luis Obispo dropped into the Purple Tier, the numbers here continue to be relatively moderate, though statistically speaking are high under the State’s rules.

As of Nov. 30, SLO County had 890 active cases of COVID-19, according to information available at: www. emergencycsl.org/en/covid19.aspx. The County added 172 cases from Nov. 25-27. COVID-19 deaths now stand at 38 since the pandemic started last April.

The County’s total number of cases since April was at 6,311 with 5,381 people already recovered.

There were 7 people in the hospital occupying some of the 369 available hospital beds. One person was in the intensive care unit, with 53 ICU beds available.

Statewide, California was up to 1,212,605 cases in a population of 39.5 million people; with 13,295,605 in the U.S. (328.2 million population); and 63,050,455 cases worldwide (7.8 billion pop.).

Morro Bay has now reached 103 cases since April. Cayucos is up to 25, Cambria 42 and Los Osos was at 114.

Paso Robles at 1,542 and SLO at 1,492 cases far out- number the rest of SLO County’s numbers.

Jail Inmates Test Positive

Inmates at the County Jail continue to test positive for COVID, though the County Sheriff’s Department has done a remarkable job of keeping it out of their facilities.

On Oct. 31, the Sheriff’s Office announced its sixth inmate had tested positive and placed him under quaran- tine. The inmate was “asymptomatic” meaning he showed no symptoms of the disease.

COVID-19 symptoms are: fever or chills, a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea.

Other inmates who were exposed to the sick guy were also quarantined. It was the first COVID-19 case in the jail since Sept. 29. But the next one came quicker but won’t be infecting anyone else in jail, as he was immediately released.

That seventh COVID-19 positive inmate was booked Nov. 9 and was only in custody for 90 minutes, during which time he was tested. He too was asymptomatic at the time, according to Sheriff’s spokesman Tony Cipolla.

When his test came back positive on Nov. 10 Cipolla said the County Health Department tracked him down with the bad news and sent him to a doctor. Cipolla said three other inmates who had contact with the man were quarantined.

COVID-19 cases at County Jail continue to be light, as three patrol deputies, five correctional deputies and now seven inmates have tested positive for the virus. The Sheriff is changing its PR procedures.

“Going forward,” Cipolla said, “the Sheriff’s Office will amend its procedure for release of information regard- ing Jail COVID cases: a press release will be generated for any outbreak at the Jail, which is defined by the California Department of Public Health as three or more cases that are believed to be linked.”

County Testing

The County has developed a robust testing program and now has the capability to test anyone that’s been ex- posed, and not just those with symptoms.

Priority groups for testing include all local healthcare workers, first responders and emergency workers, and higher risk people including seniors and those with under- lying conditions.

The County continues to have a testing site at the Mor- ro Bay Vet’s Hall, 209 Surf St. The site is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and you must make an appointment by calling 1-888-634-1123.

Urgent Care is Morro Bay, located at 783 Quintana Rd., also does COVID testing by appointment. Call (805) 771-0180 for an appointment.

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

State Water Back On In Morro Bay

By Neil Farrell

The Annual State Water Project maintenance shutdown has come and gone with little fanfare in the City of Morro Bay but gave the residents a little taste of their recy- cled water future.

The SWP was shut down from Oct. 29 through Nov. 16 for its annual maintenance work by the Central Coast Water Authority. CCWA operates the Coastal branch pipe- line that sends water from the Polonio Pass Water Treat- ment Plant (off Hwy 41 near Kettleman City) and sends it all the way to Santa Barbara County.

Morro Bay’s water cuts out at the top of Cuesta Ridge and comes to the City via the Chorro Valley Pipeline, which runs parallel to Hwy 1 and is operated by the Coun- ty Flood Control District.

The overall SWP is run by the State Department of Water Resources.

During the shutdown Morro Bay residents — some of whom on social media questioned why the water tasted so horrible? — got a taste of the future, as the City turned on its groundwater wells in the Morro Creek basin (at Lila Keiser Park) and filtered that raw water through its desali- nation plant on Atascadero Road.

Though the de-salter can no longer make drinking water from seawater, after the City abandoned the failed practice earlier this year and dismantled that portion of the plant, it is now solely used to filter the City’s Morro Basin groundwater, removing high nitrates in the feed water, and creating bottled-water-quality H2O for its customers.

When the City Water Reclamation Facility or WRF Project is completed, the City will have the capability of injecting its treated wastewater — over 800 acre feet a year — into the Morro Basin and add to the available groundwa- ter for the City.

The WRF is deigned to be a supplemental water source and a hedge against seawater intrusion. State water will continue as the City’s No.1 water source.

During the shutdown’s 19 days, according to a report

in the November City Manager’s Update, “the City treated a total of 17.649 million gallons with a daily average of 0.928 million gallons per day. Utility Division staff per- formed additional testing and hydrant flushing during this time to ensure the distributed water meets all treatment and drinking water standards.”

It was in the mid-2000s when a City study on the hydrology of Morro Creek and the Morro Valley concluded that the high nitrates found in the Morro Basin ground- water wells was due to over-fertilization by farmers and avocado growers in the valley, which lies east and upstream of the City’s well field.

However, some in the City believe that the nitrates are actually coming from leaky sewer pipes that run down Main Street and out to the treatment plant on Atascadero Road.

In any event, the City added new filter trains to the desalination plant specifically designed to handle fresh water as opposed to seawater, and the desalination plant gained a new purpose and usefulness as an integral part of the current emergency water system and future wastewa- ter-recycling scheme.

City Passes EV Station Law



Electric vehicle charging stations like this one at the old visitor’s center at Harbor Street and Piney Way in Morro Bay will get an easier path to approval under a new City ordinance. Photo by Neil Farrell

Morro Bay now has an ordinance laying out an expedit- Med review and approval process for so-called, “Elec- tric Vehicle Charging Systems,” and will be ready if and when someone finally applies for one.

On Nov. 10 the City Council approved first reading of Ord. No. 641 of the municipal code and amended Title 14, to set up a “streamlined permitting process” for EV stations.

The ordinance was in response to State Assembly Bill 1236, which in 2015 required jurisdictions with less than 200,000 population to “establish procedures for expedited, streamlined processes for permitting of electric vehicle charging stations before September 20, 2017,” reads a City staff report. “The ordinance must include the requirement that a jurisdiction adopt a checklist of requirements with which a permit application for an electric vehicle charging station will be eligible for expedited review.”

AB 1236 was passed to remove unreasonable barriers to EV station installations and “to facilitate and encourage installation of these facilities by homeowners and business- es.”

An EV charging station is someplace where electricity is available to charge plug-in electric vehicles, which can mean individual systems at homes, communal chargers at apartment and condo complexes, and commercial EV stations like one at the old City visitor’s center at Harbor Street and Piney Way, which operates with a credit card.

EV stations are proposed to be installed by the City in the public parking lot near the ‘Lil Hut burger shack on the Embarcadero and have been proposed for at least one motel projects in process now. That Atascadero Road motel project proposed a number of publicly available EV charg- ers including several of the type that power up vehicles in

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News

a short time.  
The planning department didn't work on an ordinance in 2017 "because staffing in the Building Division was in transition and lacked capacity to bring forward the ordinance."

But the City gets very few applications for EV stations and approves home EV charger systems over the counter, as part of an electrical permit. The same goes for "small commercial EV charging projects" like at the visitor's center.

However, "Larger commercial EV charging projects, with multiple charging stations that may require electrical service upgrades are more complex and would be reviewed on a submittal basis, which requires they be distributed to the various departments for a standard review process. We have not received any applications for larger commercial EV charging projects since adoption of AB 1236."

- AB 1236 outlined what local ordinances are required to contain, which includes:
- Implementation of an expedited permit and review process including electronic submittal and electronic signature for application authorization;
  - Only a single inspection can be required;
  - Creation of a checklist of all requirements necessary to be eligible for expedited review;
  - Publication of checklist on a publicly accessible website; and,
  - Prohibition of Home Owner's Association approval requirements.

The new ordinance was of course deemed to be exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act, as electric vehicles and anything to promote or proliferate their use is in keeping with the State's push toward more electric vehicles and goals to cut emissions and fight climate change.

Volunteers Sought for Advisory Boards

Morro Bay residents and others can take a leadership role in the community by applying to serve on one of the many advisory boards and commissions.

Applications are being taken now for numerous positions, some that are currently vacant and many others with incumbents up for re-appointment. Terms expire Jan. 31 for the seats being recruited for. The deadline for applications is 5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 31.

Among the positions coming up are three board members for the Harbor Advisory Board, currently held by Ron Reisner (representing marine oriented businesses), Mark Blackford (a member at large), and Jeremiah O'Brien (Commercial Fishermen's Organization). The CFO also has two alternate members for its seat at the table currently held by Owen Hackleford and Peter Griffin.

There is one vacant seat on the Citizen Oversight and

Finance Committee, which watchdogs the City's use of Measure Q sales taxes and reviews the many contracts for the Water Reclamation Facility project.

There are two seats on the Planning Commission available with the current occupants Michael Lucas and Jesse Barron. Of note, members of the Planning Commission are paid a small stipend for each meeting they attend. No other advisory boards have that benefit.

The City's seat on the Council of Government's Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee, a countywide board, is available. Current occupant is Chuck Spagnola.

The Public Works Advisory Board has four seats on the table plus one vacant position. Current occupants are Ric Deschler, Chris Eriendson, John Erwin, and Jan Goldman.

Recreation and Parks Commission has a pair of seats, with current occupants Drew Sidaris and Skip Sorich.

The Tourism Business Improvement District Advisory Board, which is facing a total restructuring of the City's promotions efforts, has two vacant seats and one occupied by Steve Allen. Allen is a member at large and one of the vacancies is also for a member at large. The other vacancy is for someone representing motels with up to 50 rooms.

Of all of these advisory bodies, it's TBID that has the most interesting immediate future.

That's because the City is planning to end its role with regards to the TBID assessment monies and how they are spent promoting tourism. The City about 5-years ago flipped the switch and took away control of the TBID purse strings, creating a new Tourism Department within the City bureaucracy, hiring a tourism director, and one full time and one part time office employee.

The actual promotional efforts were made through a contracted PR/advertising firm, Mental Marketing, to handle the various ad buys and develop promotional campaigns, and more. The TBID board was reduced from a governing board for a private non-profit organization to simply an advisory board to the City Council, with no actual power outside voting to end the assessment district. TBID is funded through a 3% per room night for all motels, RV parks, and vacation rentals.

But the Coronavirus Pandemic response of shutting down all non-essential businesses ordered first by the State, followed by the County and eventually adopted last March by the City Council, ended the City's promotional efforts like smashing into a brick wall.

Mental Marketing lost its contract, the tourism director and part time employee were laid off and the Visitor's Center, which had been run by the Chamber of Commerce, closed for good.

Now the City Manager has proposed handing responsibility for promotions back to the TBID in a process that has yet to be announced or acted upon. Though there are currently zero promotions being done, the City continues to collect the 3% TBID fees, which when the economy was normal were nearly \$1 million a year.

If readers are interested in applying for a position (you can apply for more than one but only accept appointment to one), they should go online to: [www.morro-bay.ca.us/268/Boards-Committees-Commissions](http://www.morro-bay.ca.us/268/Boards-Committees-Commissions) and click on the board you'd like to apply for.

And while most positions are reserved for Morro Bay registered voters, some members of the Harbor Board and TBID can be from outside the City, though who they represent is spelled out in the board's bi-laws.

It should also be noted that all City meetings are being held online via Zoom and if someone wants to serve on a board, they'll need access to appropriate technology.

Fresno Man Arrested on AG Murder

A Fresno man was arrested and charged with suspicion of murder after he allegedly killed an elderly woman in rural Arroyo Grande.



Kayonie Eliaz Mendibles

According to Sheriff's Department news release, deputies responded at 5:08 p.m. to a report of possible trespassing at a home in the 2000 block of Chamisal Ln., in Arroyo Grande.

Deputies on scene decided to check the welfare of anyone at the residence nearest to the reported trespassing. Deputies found a woman's body at the home who died "from an apparent homicide," the report said. The victim was later identified as 77-year old Jeanine Vore.

A "Be On the Lookout" bulletin was issued for a suspect that witnesses had seen fleeing the scene in a vehicle. Hours later, deputies spotted the suspect's car.

"Shortly before 10 p.m.," the release said, "Sheriff's deputies working in the South County area observed the suspect's vehicle traveling through Arroyo Grande, and conducted a high-risk traffic stop on northbound [Hwy] 101 near 4th Street in Pismo Beach."

The suspect was arrested without incident, and was identified as Kayonie Eliaz Mendibles, 18 of Fresno. Mendibles was booked into SLO County Jail on suspicion of murder.

The Sheriff's Office is asking anyone who was in the area of Chamisal Lane on the evening of Nov. 27 and who believes they saw Mendibles to contact the Sheriff's Office at (805)781-4550.

Information can also be provided anonymously to Crime Stoppers by calling (805) 549-STOP (7867) or through the website: [www.slotips.org](http://www.slotips.org).

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Police Blotter



Morro Bay Police Logs

- **Nov. 15:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 2:42 p.m. at Albertson’s Market on Quintana Rd. The 28-year-old bouncer was nicked for suspicion of possessing illegal drugs. He crashed in the hoosegow. It was his second run-in with the law in so many days. On Nov. 14 at 8:13 a.m. on Beach Street he was arrested for possession of suspected drug paraphernalia and had a couple of invitations to tea from the judge, for which he failed to show.
- **Nov. 14:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 8:48 p.m. at Main and Quintana Pl. The 41-year-old driver was tossed into the gaol for suspicion of driving forshnicked.
- **Nov. 13:** Police responded at 11:43 p.m. to Motel 6 in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd., for a reported burglary. Logs indicated a man said someone stole a wallet and cash out of his motel room.
- **Nov. 13:** Police responded to a home on Surf Street at 8:30 a.m. where a 35-year-old woman said she was sexually assaulted.
- **Nov. 11:** Some unknown thievin’ bilge rat stole two backpacks from the beach by Morro Rock, so round up the usual suspects.
- **Nov. 11:** Police took a report of theft and vandalism by some unknown misbegotten knave at a condo in the 900 block of Morro Ave.
- **Nov. 11:** Police responded to a traffic smash-up at 8:43 a.m. at Main and Dunes, a troublesome intersection with two of the busiest Downtown businesses — Tacos de Mexico and Bottle Liquor & Deli — which perhaps, ought to be a 4-way stop, like every other intersection for blocks. No injuries were reported but the cars were totaled.
- **Nov. 9:** Police responded at 8:21 p.m. to the 2600 block of Ironwood for a missing hooligan. Logs indicated he or she has left home without notifying their parents four or five times over the past few weeks. The kid’s tortured parents said the imp always returns the next morning and won’t say where they’ve been.
- **Nov. 9:** Police responded at 8:34 a.m. to Morro Strand RV Park in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd., where some larcenous scamboogah had extracted the tourist tax.
- **Nov. 8:** Someone found something somewhere in the 800 block of Morro Bay Blvd. Logs weren’t very specific.
- **Nov. 8:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 4 p.m. in the 1900 block of Main. Logs indicated the 62-year-old apparent swamp donkey was allegedly in possession of suspected illegal drugs and was cited and released with a future bench warrant.
- **Nov. 8:** A citizen in the 500 block of Main reported his or her bicycle was stolen, and probably traded for drugs.
- **Nov. 8:** At 1:12 a.m. police contacted a suspicious woman, 26, who was cited for suspicion of possessing drug par-

- aphernalia and released, her stash no doubt hidden where the sun don’t shine and the cops won’t look.
- **Nov. 7:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:13 p.m. somewhere on Main Street. Logs indicated the 64-year-old driver was nicked for suspicion of driving honked.
  - **Nov. 7:** Police responded at 5:47 p.m. to Embarcadero and Driftwood where a guy said he lost his wallet somewhere on the Sandspit.
  - **Nov. 7:** Someone in the 400 block of Little Morro Creek Rd., said his or her bike was missing.
  - **Nov. 7:** Police responded at 3:19 p.m. to a disturbance in the 700 block of Harbor. A 42-year-old fooliot was flexing his beer muscles.
  - **Nov. 7:** A man said he lost his wallet in the 400 block of Quintana.
  - **Nov. 7:** Police responded at 11:15 a.m. to Bottle Liquor & Deli in the 900 block of Main where they caught someone allegedly shoplifting. The sticky-fingered master criminal was cited and released.
  - **Nov. 6:** At 11:55 p.m. police contacted a 24-year-old woman somewhere on South Bay Blvd. Ol’ She-Ra was arrested for alleged possession of a switchblade.
  - **Nov. 6:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 9:50 p.m. in the 1400 block of Main. Logs indicated the 22-year-old driver was arrested for suspicion of drunk driving.
  - **Nov. 6:** Police responded at 1:11 p.m. to a car crash at Main and Errol St. No word on injuries but the cars will never be the same.
  - **Nov. 6:** Police arrested a 60-year-old man in the 700 block of Quintana on suspicion of elder abuse and violating a restraining order.
  - **Nov. 6:** Police responded to the 300 block of Dunbar, where a citizen said an apparently feculent family member had ripped them off.
  - **Nov. 5:** Police contacted a regular customer at 8:53 p.m. by the beach on Atascadero Road. Logs indicated the 40-year-old man was arrested for suspicion of possessing drugs and paraphernalia. It was the squit’s second date with Johnny Law in a week, as on Nov. 3 at 3:19 a.m. the 300 block of Marina, he was popped for alleged possession of drugs and paraphernalia, which ain’t gonna make the judge too happy.
  - **Nov. 4:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 9:34 p.m. in the 1200 block of Main. Logs indicated the 48-year old was arrested for suspicion of getting spanked on drugs.
  - **Nov. 4:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 6 a.m. on Southbound Hwy 1 at Morro Bay Boulevard. Logs indicated they arrested the 19-year-old snot waffle driving for suspicion of being UTI of drugs and having a suspended license.
  - **Nov. 3:** Police responded to a domestic disturbance in the 1300 block of Main but the suspect had already split the scene. They caught up to the hombre later and arrested him for suspicion of being spun on meth, which explains a lot.
  - **Nov. 2:** Police responded at 11:22 p.m. to a domestic dustup in the 300 block of Oahu. Logs indicated a verbal argument escalated into a “SLAP!” but with no visible injuries. Police documented the incident for when the slap turns into a punch.
  - **Nov. 2:** A man called police and said his soon-to-be-ex-wife charged \$423 on his business account at Miner’s Hardware, a hanging offense in some parts.
  - **Nov. 2:** Someone turned in a replica firearm that he or she found. There’s no word on what police are expected to do with it.

News  
False Alarm on Missing kayaker

A local kayaker was feared missing in the ocean, causing a massive search and rescue effort to be launched, was found safe at home, unaware he’d caused such a ruckus.

According to a report from the Harbor Department published in the November City Manager’s Update, someone reported on Saturday, Nov. 14, an abandoned kayak had washed ashore north of Morro Rock with no paddler anywhere to be found.

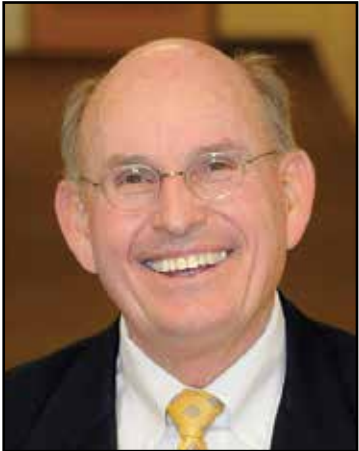
“A full search ensued just after dark,” reads the report, “with the Harbor Patrol and Coast Guard boats by water, trucks on the beach, MB Fire and Cal Fire searching on foot and two helicopters by air [CHP out of Paso Robles and Coast Guard out of Port Hueneme]. No one was found that night and the search was suspended at 1 a.m.”

Finally, someone thought to see if the guy was missing at all. “The missing person was found the following day safe at his home,” according to the report, “and said he had no idea he had caused any trouble by leaving his kayak on the beach unattended that night, after he paddled in through the surf zone and couldn’t carry the kayak back to his vehicle because it was flooded.”

The man’s name was not released by authorities. So while the search may have been good practice for when the real thing is needed, the Harbor Department issued this word of advice, “As a reminder to all paddle craft owners, please write your contact information on your property. Special stickers just for this purpose are free to the public and can be picked up at the Harbor Department and Coast Guard Station, and can save fist responders many hours of trouble [and considerable expense!], and possibly putting themselves in peril searching in treacherous conditions.”

Stork Heads CASA Board

Four new members have joined the board of directors of Court Appointed Special Advocates of San Luis Obispo County, Inc. Dr. Gilbert Stork, the new CASA board president and past president of Cuesta College, leads the slate which includes new members James Simonaro and Kaimy Chappell. Additionally, Kelly Sanders moved from president to secretary, and Suzy da Silva Hamilton stepped up to vice president. After many years serving as a CASA volunteer assisting a child, Rudy Bachmann of San Luis Obispo has also joined the board.



Dr. Gilbert Stork

“The COVID-19 pandemic has hit these vulnerable children especially hard,” said Stork, “but our dedicated volunteers never paused in their advocacy for their health and well-being. I am so proud of what they accomplish.”

With the current health crisis compelling some volunteers and donors to reduce their support of CASA, the newly expanded board will prove crucial in assisting with increasing community support.

CASA is in its 27th year of providing advocacy for court-dependent children in this county who have been abused and neglected. Most of the youth CASA serves live in foster care and face many challenges to their health, education, and general wellbeing. A CASA volunteer becomes the child’s trusted, consistent adult, regardless of changes to the child’s school or place of residence.

In 2019, CASA provided an advocate to 322 children and oversaw volunteers who logged over 32,000 hours improving children’s lives.

For more information, contact: staff@slocasa.org

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# Community

## CCA Takes Art to the Streets

Photos and story by Jill Turnbow



Work progresses on the mural project on the wall of Cutrazzola Winery and Once Upon a Tyme's shop.

Things are becoming a lot more colorful in the West Village of Cambria. Cambria Center for the Arts (CCA), has spent the last few weeks completing the mural project on the wall of Cutrazzola Winery and Once Upon a Tyme's shop on the north end of Main St.

Part of the Art Center's goals for 2020 was to engage the community and reach outside of the gallery. During the time of the shutdown seemed like a good time to do that. Mary Fedrow, CCA's president, says "Our mission is to bring art and people together and since our doors have to be closed right now, we decided to bring the art out to our community."

Cutrazzola Winery was enthusiastic about giving the organization permission to paint the mural on the south side of their building. Other locations are being considered for future murals as well.

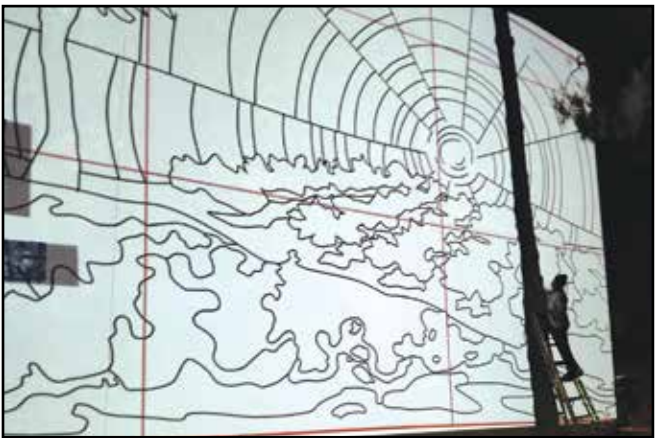
Earlier in the summer, artists were invited to submit ideas and a committee was formed to select the winning mural. Tigg Morales, a long-time Cambria resident, realtor, and artist, was chosen.

"Watching the project come to life is truly a magical experience," said Tigg. "The original piece was small, so projecting the line drawing at night under the stars felt like the painting took on a new life of its own, almost a cinematic experience."

CCA rented an electric lift, borrowed equipment, and projected the image onto the wall at night so that the image could be traced. Roughly 25 volunteers have helped bring it to life. Artists have taken shifts to put up the stencil and then paint the image.

"Going from a small piece of paper to a large stucco wall, I hope the piece holds together and keeps its charm," Tigg said. "I think it will!"

Tigg is no stranger to the Cambria art scene. She has been designing sets for the high school musicals for about



Tigg Morales stands on a ladder as she works on a mural project in Cambria.

12 years and has also worked on several productions at Cambria Center for the Arts Theater. She was working on both the high school production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" and the CCAT production of "Cambria The Musical" when Covid shut down both shows. "So it's very exciting for me to have a permanent piece go up," says Tigg.

The project has been bringing the community together across generations.

"The mural has brought out a lot of younger people interested in what we are doing," Mari Fedrow said. "Many weren't even aware of CCA. I think it's great that more people are learning about us and can see what we are doing for Cambria."

Cambria Center for the Arts is a non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and engaging people through art, film and theatre. Due to the coronavirus, their income sources have been minimal and are seeking donations to assist with the project and other projects they are planning. They are hoping to develop a sculpture garden as well as other murals. Donations are being accepted on the website to help with the crane rental and paint supplies. Readers can find more information or make a donation at [Cambria-centerforthearts.org](http://Cambria-centerforthearts.org).

## The Natural World King Tides Coming to the Central Coast

Story & Photo by Ruth Ann Angus

Every year with great anticipation I await the announcement of the California King Tides Project. This is a project of the California Coastal Commission and photographers can have a lot of fun with it and help science in the process.

The California King Tides Project calls on us to photograph our highest high tides and lowest low tides of the year. Beginning in November for a period of days around the shining of the full moon, we experience a dramatic rise in sea level. This in-rushing water floods the bay and estuary leaving little dry land for birds and other sea creatures.

Documenting these tides helps scientists to preview the impacts of sea level rise and understand how the shoreline is affected by high water. Participating in this project will have you contributing to an important community science effort. Conversely photographing the corresponding lowest tides shows the extreme outflowing of the water exposing areas that are not seen at any other time.

Tide chart books list in feet the low and high tides for this area. You will also find out what time of day each level occurs, and this is listed for each month of the year for a 24-hour time period. Tides levels and times are different for each area of the coastline so you would need a tide chart book for the area where you are located. Tides in Southern California are very different than tides for the Central Coast. The California King Tide Project lists King Tides already occurred on November 15-16, but more are coming December 13-15 this year and for locations north of Vandenberg/Point Conception again on January 11-12, 2021.



Windy Cove at King High Tide in January of 2015

The California King Tide Project answers the question as to what causes sea level rise and why King Tide information is important:

"The rise in sea level we're experiencing now and will experience in the future is caused by burning fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas. Carbon dioxide in our atmosphere acts like a blanket, trapping in heat that would otherwise escape. When we burn fossil fuels, we're adding more carbon dioxide, 'thickening the blanket' and warming the planet and ocean. Sea level is rising because land-based glaciers and ice sheets are melting into the ocean and because water expands in volume when it warms. The amount of sea level rise we will ultimately experience will depend on how quickly we stop burning fossil fuels.

King Tides themselves are not caused by sea level rise but allow us to experience what higher sea level will be like. King Tides are the highest high tides of the year, about a foot or two higher than average tides, which corresponds to the one to two-foot rise in sea level expected during the next few decades. When you observe the King Tides, imagine seeing these tides (and the flooded streets, beaches, and wetlands) every day. Understanding what a King Tide looks like today will help us plan for sea level rise in the future."

You can participate in the California King Tide Project by going to the website at [california.kingtides.net](http://california.kingtides.net) and uploading your photos either on the website or with a free app for your phone. You can also see photos of other coastal areas and access a map of all the King Tides photos from the past few years.

## Cambria Film Festival Tickets on Sale



David McAbee on the set of "For the Love of Jesse," one of the films slated for the 2021 Cambria Film Festival, February 4-7.

The Cambria Film Festival returns for its fourth year February 4 -7, 2021. Once again, it brings independent films from around the world to Cambria—all with a focus on romance, romantic comedies and the complexities of love.

This year, the Festival plans include virtual screenings as well as a limited number of in-person screenings at the Cambria Center for the Arts Theatre. As in past years, there will be a number of full-length features in competition, plus 50 or more shorts grouped into themed programs. Also scheduled across the four days are on-line parties, streamed filmmaker talks, and special spotlight

Film Festival Continued on page 10

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# Community

## Ducky Derby Was No Turkey



Morro Bay Rotary members and volunteers for the Ducky Derby: Mike Pond, Matt and Lindsay Ashton, Matt Fontenot, Mike Nelson, Sue and Tim Olivas, Doug Riddell, Lori French, John Long, Linda Tarbell-Messer, Jude Long, Judy Salamacha (Greg Hardcastle not pictured was a wrangler in his electric kayak and Greg was the originator of the Ducky Derby idea)

The Rotary Club of Morro Bay held its 1st Annual Ducky Derby fundraiser earlier this month by releasing 449 yellow rubber duckies into the Bay not fully realizing it was a King Tide. It was a speedy race with wayward duckies wrangled back in line by volunteers on kayaks and paddle boards.

The Harbor Patrol lent support and at the Tidelands Park finish line, all ducks were retrieved from the water to protect the environment. While no duckies were harmed in the process, there was a close call. During a test run, a seagull swooped down and grabbed one carrying it off squeaking before dropping it back in the Bay.

Due to coronavirus restrictions there was no crowd, but there were some on-lookers including John Solu out for his early morning walk. The event was live streamed, but Wi-Fi was difficult in the Bay so the video filmed by

videographers Zeke and Landis Turley is posted on the Club's FaceBook page: "Rotary Club of Morro Bay".

**Cash prizes for the 3 fastest duckies were:**

- \$300 to Sandra and Tom Souther from Fresno
- \$200 to Steve Knuckles, our member & MB Fire Chief from Atascadero
- \$100 to Arra Gilpin, mother of our member Heidi Kimbrell from Morro Bay

Fundraising Chair and President Elect, Tim Olivas announced the proceeds would go to support Club's "Help Us Help Others" Campaign to support local health, safety and education projects. After the winners learned that the funds would go to support projects like the SLO Food Bank, Got Your Back and Salvation Army, all three chose to donate their winnings back to Rotary!

tificates, GED, and ESL certificates from Fall 2019, Spring 2020, and Summer 2020. Of this year's graduating class, 520 students came from local high schools. A record-breaking 294 of these students are Cuesta College Promise Scholarship recipients, which provides two fee-free years of college.

Awarded this year are a total of 464 associate of arts degrees, 236 associate of sciences degrees, and 591 associate of transfer degrees. The graduating class is made up of students with the age range of 17 to 72. Of the graduates, 311 earned honors or high honors by achieving a grade point average of 3.5 or higher, including 16 who earned a perfect 4.0 GPA. A total of 19 veterans earned degrees this year, representing the Air Force, Army, Marine, Navy, and Coast Guard.

The drive-through commencement caravan will begin at the Hollister Road entrance to the campus and be directed to Parking Lot 5, where the campus community will

cheer on participants. Graduates will exit their vehicles at the end of the route, walk across the stage, and take a photo. The event will be streamed live on the Cuesta College website at [bit.ly/streamgrad](http://bit.ly/streamgrad) and Facebook.

For students without a vehicle, transportation will be arranged for you to participate. Please contact Will Wooster at (805) 546-3100 x2328 for more information.

Masks and physical distancing of at least six feet are required during the ceremony. Students are asked not to come to campus if they are ill, experiencing symptoms, or may have been exposed to the coronavirus. For more information on Cuesta College COVID-19 policies and guidelines, please visit the resource webpage at [cuesta.edu/covid-19](http://cuesta.edu/covid-19).

Participating graduates are asked to register at [bit.ly/cougarcaravan2020](http://bit.ly/cougarcaravan2020) by Dec. 14. Regalia, class rings, and other items must be ordered by Nov. 22 online at [bit.ly/2JQPETR](http://bit.ly/2JQPETR).

## Plastic Bags are Not Recyclable



When it comes to disposing of plastic bags, they must be tossed into the garbage. Plastic bags cannot be recycled in your curbside recycling. Let's breakdown why they are so problematic when tossed in the wrong bin.

Why, you ask? The reason lies in how things get recycled, according to San Luis Obispo County Integrated Waste Management Authority

Everything in your recycling bin first goes to a Material Recovery Facility (MRF) where items get sorted into like piles. Plastic bottles end up in their own pile, as does cardboard, glass, steel, aluminum, and other types of hard plastic containers. Plastic bags, however, do not end up in their own special pile but instead in the leftovers called "residuals."

The residuals go to the landfill and are essentially all of the material that were not supposed to be put in the recycle bin in the first place. Plastic bags are residual because they can't be efficiently sorted with the machinery available at Materials Recovery Facilities.

Not only do plastic bags end up in the landfill, they reduce the efficiency of recycling at the MRF. Plastic bags, because of their lightweight and flimsy nature, can easily get tangled in the machinery. Think of what would happen, for example, if you tried to vacuum a plastic bag. Chances are it would get wrapped around the rotating brush of the vacuum and get clogged somewhere along the system. That is essentially what happens at the MRF, at which point workers have to shut down the entire operation and climb into the dangerous machinery to remove the bag.

So next time you need to dispose of a plastic bag remember to toss it in the trash and not the recycling. If the non-recyclable plastic waste is upsetting to you, The IWMA recommends avoiding using plastic bags in the first place.

For more information on what can or cannot be recycled, go to <https://iwma.com/>





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# Community

## Changing Lives One Car at a Time



Morro Bay Lions third car giveaway this year was presented to Gail Wang of Los Osos at the MB Community Thanksgiving Dinner

The Morro Bay Lions have once again donated a car to someone in need. The goal of the service organization's car donation program is to help individuals needing transportation when a car will help them become more self-sufficient, obtain or maintain employment, care for their family and assist others.

The Lions car donation program is a coalition of the Morro Bay Community Resource Connections, Todd's Garage and the MB Lions Foundation. The CRC receives applications, Todd's Garage finds and repairs cars to be

donated and the MB Lions Foundation covers costs and selects recipients.

You can help! They need donated cars to be given away or sold to fund purchase and repair of cars to be donated. Donors of cars will receive a receipt for the Blue Book value of the car according to IRS guidelines for tax purposes. To donate a car call Bill Todd at 805-772-1985. To request a car call Sharon O'Leary at 805-225-1991 for an application.

## Dawn Ortiz-Legg to Succeed Adam Hill on Board of Supervisors

California Governor Gavin Newsom announced the appointment of SLO County Planning Commissioner Dawn Ortiz-Legg to the District 3 seat on the County's Board of Supervisors.

Ortiz-Legg will fill the seat left vacant following the death of Supervisor Adam Hill in August. She must be sworn in by County Clerk-Recorder Tommy Gong. No date for the swearing in has been set yet.

"I have had the pleasure of working with Dawn Ortiz-Legg in the past, in various capacities," said Lynn Compton, County Board Chair and District 4 Supervisor. "I look forward to continuing that relationship in her new role, and have already called and congratulated her."

Ortiz-Legg 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.

## American Pickers In California



"American Pickers," the History Channel's coolest show will be in California in December, and if anyone's got a lot of antiques and collectibles (i.e. junk), the show may want to visit with you.

Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz are the stars of American Pickers, a documentary series that "cruises the back roads of America looking for rusty gold."

They bring knowledge, a good eye for the unusual and rare, and they bring lots of cash too wherever they go, and in December the Iowa natives will be in the Golden State.

Frank and Mike are on a mission to recycle and rescue forgotten relics, especially old motorcycles, cars, trucks and items that tell the story of America.

If readers have a collection they'd liked picked — especially in these tight money days of COVID and the death of jobs and livelihoods — they should email the show at: americanpickers@cinetflix.com, call (855) OLD-RUST. Or check them out on Facebook at: @GotAPick.

And for anyone who hasn't seen the show, new episodes air locally at 6 p.m., Mondays on The History Channel.

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# Letter to The Editor



## Do Better Estero Bay News

The Oct. 25 police log describes one of our officers stopping a vehicle for a “trumped up code violation.” This example demonstrates a complete lack of journalistic ethics, leading a reader to believe our police department is aggressively fraudulent.

I know for a fact (and I can back it up) that the dated actions listed are cherry picked leading to the speculation that the writer only picks events where an insipid sense of humor can be used.

In a written piece about the Buoy Bar, he states, “One of Morro Bay’s favorite watering holes.” That is an opinion. The place was certainly not one of my favorite water holes, but it might have been his.

The Estero Bay News can and should do better.

*William Fritch  
Morro Bay*

## Water Supply Not Sufficient in Los Osos — a letter to the County Board of Supervisors.

We join with the concerned residents of Los Osos who have urged you not to approve new development over the Los Osos Groundwater Basin until such time as it can be shown that the basin is capable of serving new development while continuing to serve existing homes and businesses while sustaining the habitat and wildlife that rely on it.

The Los Osos Community Plan should allow the approval of new development only in the presence of real evidence that the water supply is sufficient to support that development without permanently harming the basin, existing development, and ESHA. Absent such evidence, the proposed LOCP language is inconsistent with Public Works policy 1 and Watershed policies 1 and 2 in the Local

Coastal Plan, Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance Section 23.04.403, and Special Condition 5 of the Los Osos Wastewater Project requiring a guarantee of adequate groundwater for ESHA and maximized conservation measures.

We have reviewed the documents submitted to the Basin Management Committee pertaining to recent water level and chloride metrics and concur that the evidence shows that seawater intrusion has been rapidly advancing over the last two years, and is near the point of no return in the deep aquifer (2500 mg/l of chlorides.) Per the 2019 monitoring report, water levels ranged from sea level to eight feet below sea level, in stark contrast to the Basin Plan’s target of aquifer levels at eight feet above mean sea level in order to stop and reverse seawater intrusion.

It is clear to us that these metrics, not the degree to which residents have adopted retrofits or achieved water conservation goals, should govern the County’s decisions on proposed revisions to the Growth Management Ordinance exempting accessory dwelling units, affordable housing, and commercial-to-residential conversions from growth limits. Nor is proof of sustainable yield to be found in proposed LOCP language and revisions to the Growth Management Ordinance eliminating the requirement for determination of a sustainable water supply for certain new development, replacing that determination with a requirement for a 2:1 retrofit.

In short, it should be clear, per the standard in the proposed LOCP language, that new development cannot be “accommodated by the sustainable yield of the Los Osos Groundwater Basin without causing seawater intrusion, as identified in the Basin Plan and annual monitoring reports.”

We reiterate the recommendation we made in our August 25, 2015, letter to Kelly Brown, SLO County Dept. of Planning, for language in the LOCP:

“Prior to approval of any new development, conclusive evidence (well tests over time) must show that seawater intrusion has reversed and ample freshwater exists in the Basin to support the current population plus additional population.... All new development over the Basin shall be prohibited until the Basin Plan Water Level and Chloride Metrics have been exceeded, showing the Basin has ample reserves to sustainably support additional development while maintaining ample storage capacity to weather droughts and climate change. As an additional minimum requirement, no wells, including private wells and test/observation wells, shall have a chloride level above 100 mg/l or water levels below 9.5 feet above mean sea level (amsl) in the Lower Aquifer, 13.5 feet amsl in the deep aquifer, and 6 feet amsl in the Upper Aquifer. The amount of new development allowed will depend on the extent to which these minimum requirements are exceeded, indicating excess Basin capacity, and conservative estimates, based on water use and other data, of the amount of development the added capacity will support.”

*Andrew Christie  
Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club*

## Letter to the County on Los Osos Water

S&T Water thanks you for the opportunity to voice our perspective on the planning efforts for our community here in Los Osos. We certainly understand that a great deal of time and effort have gone into the County’s work with the Los Osos Community plan.

While we are the smallest purveyor of water in our community, we are on the front line of those affected by seawater intrusion and nitrates from historical and current septic systems. Our primary well is the westernmost community water source and as such, our water supply is very vulnerable to seawater intrusion. As you know, the current metrics of the Basin Management Committee are indicating no improvement and perhaps even an increase in the threat of seawater intrusion. In addition to the threat of sea water intrusion, S&T is also threatened by nitrate pollution originating from the high-density septic systems currently permitted by the County in the Cabrillo Estates area. The S&T community water source, which supplies drinking water to approximately 591 citizens of Los Osos, is threatened with imminent failure when the nitrate concentrations in this source continue to increase in the next decade or two.

We are cautiously optimistic that the programs under the management of the Los Osos Basin Management Committee will eventually allow the community water sources in Los Osos to become sustainable for the current population. We do not believe these supplies to be sustainable now. Progress is materializing, but we are fearful that “turning on the tap” of development, without greater margins of safety, will lead to unnecessary harm and expense.

Our primary responsibility is to our shareholders to continue to provide a safe, clean and sustainable water supply.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Chris Gardner  
Los Osos  
Vice President of the Board and S&T Staff Representative to  
the Los Osos Basin Management Committee*

## Letter Policy

*Please include your full name and town you live in on all letters sent. Although we do welcome longer opinion pieces, publishing is as space permits. Estero Bay News reserves the right to edit for length and clarity. Email letters to  
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Leaseholders From page 1

Landing), said he served for 2 years on a committee going through the master lease policy and realized there was little communication with the leaseholders. Fowler and Cherise Hansson of the Harbor Advisory Board and a master leaseholder too, were on the committee.

And the City’s work on updating the general plan and local coastal plan, which is practically the Bible over waterfront development, too was pushing ahead without input from the leaseholders. “There was no one on the general plan committee from the waterfront,” Fowler said, “and when it was finally written up there were some real deal killers.”

Van Beurden added that the LCP sent up red flags, and some of the provisions didn’t make any sense, were impossible to achieve or prohibitively expensive.

“It has some poorly written sections,” Van Beurden said, “that will have impacts for the future.”

Their chief concerns include the Harborwalk, the City’s planned pedestrian walkway on the waterside of the lease sites. The City instituted the concept long ago, and improvements are the responsibility of the master leaseholders to build, either when a site is redeveloped or significantly expanded or even if the use changes.

For example, Rose’s Landing is currently under construction to change its second floor into motel rooms. That project triggered a requirement to rebuild the Harborwalk across the west side, a massive project requiring huge I-beams, new pilings and a new seawall.

Fowler commented, “We’re not against the Harborwalk, but it needs to be implemented so it makes sense.”

For another example, the LCP’s treatment of sea level rise, which they said calls for the Harborwalk to be put on floats. But that would also mean the land is being inundated with seawater, and essentially unusable.

It also changes the width of the Harborwalk from 8 feet to 10, which could mean in Van Beurden’s case, either loping off part of his restaurant building or paying enormous costs to drive new piles and widen the path. The Dutchman was totally remodeled in the early 1990s with an 8-foot walkway installed and he’s planning to propose some improvements that would bring the Harborwalk around an old fishermen’s wharf at the Dutchmen’s lease site. He’s hoping to also get a significant extension of his lease, which has just 13 years left.

Van Beurden added that there’s a huge eel grass bed on the bay floor at his lease site, making expansion of the walkway much more difficult and expensive. Driving new piles alone could run \$180,000, he said, for just 2 feet more width.

It’s the Coastal Commission that came up with the 10-foot standard, which caused the remodel and seawall repair at The Boatyard to have to demolish and rebuild part of the walkway on that site.

Smith Held, the group’s vice president said the remodel of the Harbor Center (home of the Hofbrau), where he has the master lease, was just rebuilt at 8-feet and if the change to 10 feet becomes Gospel, he’ll technically be

non-conforming and any future project could trigger the expansion requirement.

Cathy Novak, who is the group’s hired consultant, said the City’s in-lieu fee for lateral access at places where it simply can’t be installed has problematic language as well.

Among the definitions “shall” and “will” “should” and “may” in the document “are mandatory unless there’s a compelling reason to do otherwise. And, ‘wholly disproportionate’ is the cutoff. The language is totally subjective.”

Held said it’s hard to develop a plan when the rules change through project review, like when it goes to the Coastal Commission, which has ultimate jurisdiction over the waterfront.

Whatever the City ultimately puts in the LCP and is certified by the Coastal Commission, the State agency will hold the City to it. Novak said therein lies the problem for the leaseholders.

“The LCP and general plan,” she said, “should be ‘big picture’ and not have specifics. Specifics go in the zoning ordinance.”

Fowler said, “It turns into handcuffs. The whole waterfront will deteriorate if you can’t redevelop.”

Fowler said the master lease policy is a roadmap for the Harbor Department to manage the lease sites. “We’re advocating for the market to drive what’s needed down here.”

“There are a lot of unintended consequences,” Novak said. “They don’t understand what it takes to run a business on the waterfront.”

She explained that someone might go to the bank for a \$500,000 loan to remodel, but then they need another \$200,000 for later access. “So you have to borrow another \$200,000 that you get no revenue from,” she said. “But your loan is now \$700,000.”

Van Beurden said the group really came together over concern about the City’s Coronavirus Pandemic response that shut down the Embarcadero last spring but soon morphed to include issues in general on the waterfront.

They’ve submitted a formal set of comments to be included with the Planning Commission’s review of the draft general plan/LCP. It’s the first formal input they’ve released and seeks to make the business climate on the waterfront easier to live with.

Harbor Director Eric Endersby said the initial concerns were over the City’s deferred rents enacted last spring to help get Embarcadero lease holders through the shut down, and how and when would that need to be repaid?

“In that role,” Endersby told Estero Bay News, “they have been quite helpful and we are working with them on a couple possible options.”

He added, “I think it is great that they formed, in fact, I urged a couple of them to do just that as I had several hitting me from different directions in the early COVID days. So it’s great that they have formed a representative group.”

Community Development Director, Scot Graham, said the EMLH’s input on the City’s plans would be considered by the Planning Commission when it goes over the draft documents.

“We are always interested in making the document more clear and straightforward,” Graham said, “so their input will likely result in doing just that.”

He disagreed that the sea level rise language was confusing. “I don’t think it’s all that confusing and neither does the Planning Commission or Coastal Staff,” he said, “but that being said we will be going over all of their comments, likely at the December 1 Planning Commission meeting and perhaps we will be able to provide language that is more clear.”

As for the group’s future, Endersby thinks it’ll be helpful. “I think they will be a valuable sounding board when we need to bounce things off of them as a group,” he said, “in addition to being good reps of the group for collective issues of concern, like the lease rents and COVID. I am also hopeful they will as a group work together for collective issues and come up with collective solutions, as opposed to the one-off solutions that often come about on a site-by-site basis.”

Save Christmas From page 1

communities.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.

Even Black Friday, the 1-day mega-sale Friday after Thanksgiving, has morphed into a “Black Friday Month,” as merchants struggle through the pandemic response and the devastation on the economy and on life overall.

The organizers of the Polar Bear Dip posted the following notice on their website: “Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, the polar bear dip this year has been cancelled. We ask that all visitors to Cayucos respect county and state requirements for safe social distancing and not gather in groups...our top priority is the safety of our community and visitors.”

And even though we could all probably use a dip in the Pacific Ocean to wash away this most difficult year, the enormous gathering of thousands at the Polar Bear Dip won’t be an official event. (That of course won’t prevent people from doing it anyway, which is how the whole thing got started in the first place.)

Even the Annual Christmas Lights Contest put on by Morro Bay Beautiful has been canceled, the group deciding it wasn’t possible to get together to judge.

There is good news, the Los Osos / Baywood Park Chamber of Commerce invites residents and businesses to get in the holiday spirit and “Light Up” Los Osos by decorating their homes and/or businesses for Christmas.

“Our goal is to have a fun and safe way to engage our community this year and what better way to decorate your home for your neighbors to see,” said chamber officials. “It gets even better, there are prizes to be won if you enter our contest and decorate.”

The grand prizewinner with the best-decorated house will win a gift basket worth over \$150 featuring items from local businesses. Each participant will be entered into a drawing to receive additional awards.

Anyone wanting to participate should email the Los Osos / Baywood Park Chamber at info@lobpchamber.org with your address or your general location so they will know where to look for your Christmas lights. The chamber will create a guide so people know where to go check out the lights.

Readers can also check their Facebook page for event details and updates @lobpchamber. Decorating has to be done by Dec 18 and winners will be presented on Monday Dec 21.

The chamber gives a shout out to the businesses helping with the event: Stone Axe Co, Tongue Fu Training Institute, CG Bookkeeping, Pacific Capital Mortgage, Crizer Construction, Bay Osos Brokers, Coastal Real Estate, Los Osos Valley Mortuary, Golden State Water, Bear Valley Realty, Carstairs Energy, and Energy Wise Realty.

We at Estero Bay News cling to the notion that this season of hope, charity, kindness and giving will not be canceled, too.

So we’ve decided to ask readers to help us shine a little happiness in everyone’s lives and to break out the Christmas lights and do your homes and businesses up like a Hollywood movie.

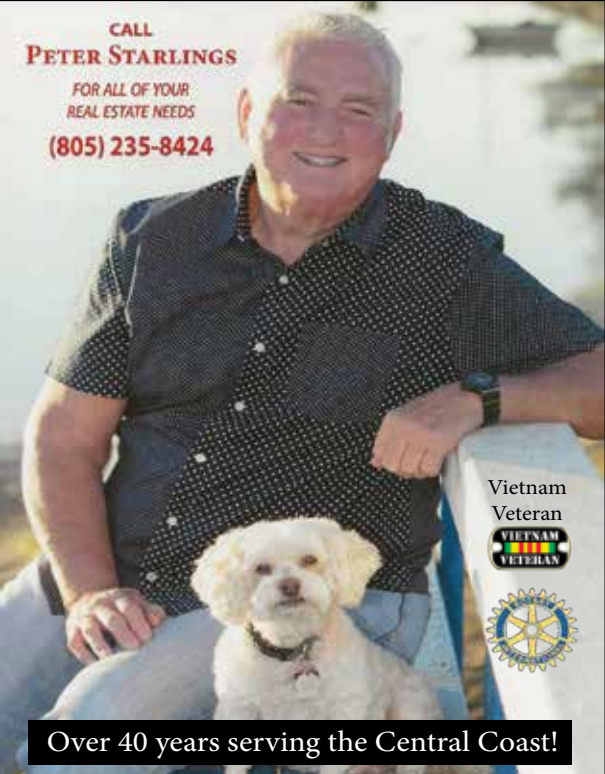
There won’t be an official contest, but we will reward several people’s efforts in a special photo feature of homes and businesses in our Dec. 17 edition (the last one of the year).

Readers are encouraged to email us the addresses (including the town — Los Osos, Morro Bay, Cambria or Cayucos) of homes and businesses you think did an exceptional job with lights and décor and we’ll go out and take the pictures.

And please be generous with the various toy and food drives being carried out now. We can’t think of a year where there have been so many people struggling and hurting. The need for the “Christmas spirit” has never been greater this century.

Email the street address and town name of exceptional displays of Christmas lights and décor to: dean@estero-baynews.com before Dec. 11 and we’ll take it from there.

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Kevin says,  
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**ANT**  
on the  
Door"



KEVIN O'CONNOR, President



Morro Bay In Bloom From page 1

MBIB is making a beautiful difference.

“When I say (urban) beautification,” said Heath, “I feel it a bit arrogant because we already live in such a beautiful place. I believe what MBIB does is provide a beautiful frame the for beauty already here.”

During their celebration he and members reminisced: Heath recalled, “It still amazes me each week when someone in the group says, ‘We’ll never do this in 2 hours.’ After seven years I’ve gotten pretty good at planning what we can accomplish in 2 hours. The group gets to the site and I always hear ‘No way will we get this done’ and after 2 hours of catching up while we work someone will inevitably say ‘OMG, we did it.’ It makes me smile every time.”

Carrie Filler said, “I always have fun. The Roundabout makes the big splash. That’s what is noticed. This year’s fall display looks so good.”

“We had to get crab grass out of the bike park to plant agave and lantana. It was the toughest assignment I worked on,” said Ed Bois. “It was grueling work, but satisfying.”

Jane Heath recalls their first American In Bloom conference when Morro Bay won its category. “First we watched all the competitors’ videos. They were amazing and I leaned over to Walter to whisper there was no way we would win, but little ‘ole Morro Bay won.”

Walter added Jane was particularly grateful to member and newly elected Morro Bay City Councilwoman Laurel Barton, for negotiating a starter plant program with Cal Poly. Jane’s been waiting at least seven years for her husband to finally design and plant their own patio garden.

Jan Goldman, an original Bloomie, loved the day “...a man from DC showed up at the Welcome Center and asked if there was a rule in Morro Bay that everyone in the city had to maintain their garden. He thought we looked manicured and pretty.”

One Saturday John O’Brien realized it was okay not to be perfect when he was told his lantana plantings were three centimeters off.

Eileen Sweeney said, “I love driving around the city and seeing the difference so few people have made to make a special difference in how our city looks.”

Although the kudos were generously directed towards the member volunteers, it must be noted a strong, sustained organization thrives best when led by a passionate and dedicated chairman. Heath was raised in San Francisco loving his time gardening. Both sets of grandparents gardened - one greenhouse gardening while the other preferred truck farming edibles.

Once he retired from a career as a chemical engineer/protein scientist specializing in enzymes and living in Morro Bay, he took on his advocacy for gardening as if it were a full time career. When asked why, he said, “MBIB makes me happy. It draws from all my skill-sets. It combines my passions to build community and plant gardens. I love building community but most of the time I was working in the political arena and there you always have a winner and loser and then move on to the next election cycle. This is not satisfying to me. MBIB builds community with long lasting effects that are satisfying.”

Heath explained why urban planting is important. Himself an America In Bloom board member, he joined a group of professional and community urban planners to provide research and visitations to share their expertise with communities worldwide. AIB’s research discovered, “...a beautifully landscaped community will see less crime and graffiti.” Heath added, “Each week our members will hear the color we add to the planter boxes and landscape areas brighten up our area. People will say, ‘I get so tired of the fog and the colors brighten my mood.’ The contrast of browns and grays with color elevates any mood.”

MBIB was established with twenty-five members. Their first project was the Morro Bay Library. The group officially adopted Centennial Park for upkeep and enhancements. When the Morro Bay Garden Club needed support, MBIB assumed the Harbor Walk Coleman Beach areas. The roundabout care was requested by the Morro Bay Rotary Club. A newer program is sponsored planter boxes like those at Main Street and Morro Bay Blvd., for example,

Top Dog Coffee Bar, Sunshine Market and more.

With 60-plus current members several offer alternative skills and interests such as litter pick-up, tree plantings, home pollinator gardens and historical preservation projects.

To get involved contact morrobayinbloom@gmail.com or private message Walter Heath on Facebook.

Apartment Project From page 1

bedrooms units affordably priced for working families and individuals.

The Morro Bay project is on a vacant, .94-acre site at the corner of Atascadero Road and Sunset Avenue. The project will have a community room with a full kitchen. The buildings are two and three story and have a mix of 17, 1-bedroom units, nine 2-bedroom units and nine 3-bedroom units.

Also planned are a laundry room and a large, common, open area with a playground, and a picnicking area with outdoor grills, benches, tables and more.

That project has already been granted permits and is well along in the development process. It should be noted that the Housing Corp had asked for \$250,000.

Senior Planner Cindy Jacinth’s staff report said that project, “is consistent with previously established City goals to support affordable housing.”

It’s also not the first time the City Council has thrown money at the project. Back in June, it loaned the project \$150,000 out of the City’s housing in-lieu fund, a fee paid by developers instead of building required affordable units with a larger project.

And the Council also deferred some \$350,000 in permit fees also in the form of a loan. But the \$500,000 in loans doesn’t have to be repaid for 55 years, until the affordable housing deed restrictions on the project are expired. Until then, no payments will be made on the loans, which carry a 3% interest rate once repayment begins.

The final amount of the City’s CDBG award is actually unknown, and won’t be final until a Federal budget is approved. The city manager will adjust the amounts as needed.

The CDBG program comes through the Department of Housing and Urban Development and is allocated based on population, so Morro Bay always gets the minimum amount available.

It can be used for various things, housing, infrastructure and more depending on the needs and what projects apply for funding.

The City received four applications. One was from People’s Self Help Housing for \$8,637 for its “Supportive Housing Program,” which provides clinical services and case management to residents of PSHH’s other affordable units around SLO County, but specifically four in Morro Bay, at 2612 Elm St, 495 Main St., 456 Elena St, and 375 Sequoia St.

These complexes are for low-income families (Section-8) and seniors. PSHH actually asked for \$69,900 from the whole county with the Morro Bay portion at \$8,637.

Another unfunded request was made by the Salvation Army for \$300,000 for a project they want to do somewhere in the county to raise \$600,000 to provide four units of “supportive housing for homeless persons who need long-term support to prevent a return to homelessness,” reads Jacinth’s report.

That seemingly noble goal wasn’t far enough along in the development process to warrant any of Morro Bay’s award at this time, so it was not funded.

The County will now collect the recommendations by the various city councils in SLO County and put it all together into one big funding request.

The Housing Corporation also requested funding from a couple of other County programs — The application also includes a request to the County for HOME and Title 29 funding, along with CDBG monies and totaling \$1 million in requested funding.

The Morro Bay Family Apartments project is a collaboration between San Luis Obispo Nonprofit Corporation (SLONP), a Community Housing Development Corpora-

tion (CHDO), the Housing Authority of San Luis (HAS-LO), and San Luis Obispo-based residential developer and builder Jim Rendler, according to the HASLO website.

Rendler focuses on public-private partnerships and has been involved with affordable housing projects on the West Coast since 2006.

A CHDO’s mission “is to serve the local community by acquiring, developing, rehabilitating, owning, and managing affordable housing throughout the County of San Luis Obispo.”

SLONP is the managing general partner and will own on the project. Since 1990, SLONP has built over 700 affordable apartments, many in collaboration with community partners.

“The mission of HASLO is to provide affordable housing throughout San Luis Obispo County,” the organization’s website said. “As the local Housing Authority, we are stewards of certain resources that are able to uniquely serve the poorest of the poor. HASLO plans to commit ‘Project Based Section 8’ vouchers to this project, and will provide other long term financing to the project. HASLO will provide housing management, and income certifications to ensure regulatory compliance.”

Of the 35 units in Morro Bay, 26 are to be for “very low income” people and eight for “low income” folks. Using housing vouchers will help the tenants make rent payments and keep the apartments at affordable rates, according to HASLO.

HASLO has projects under construction and in process across SLO County. Projects under construction now are: 20 apartments in Nipomo; 20 in Arroyo Grande; and 36 at the Courtyard at the Meadows in SLO.

They are proposing 20 apartments in Pismo Beach; and two other projects in SLO — a 10-apartment mixed-use project on Broad Street; and a project on the site of the old Maxine Lewis Homeless Shelter on Orcutt Road with 35 units.

They also have rehab projects at 14 other sites totaling some \$25 million, with “Many other sites also in progress.”

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Older adults in SLO County were cut off from meals, activities, friends, and easy access to services as senior centers closed earlier this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but local organizations have been modifying programs to provide practical help and social connection for that population.

senior centers and other service groups for older adults included a conversation about support for during the pandemic. SLO Village (a nonprofit organization that serves independent older adults) organized the discussion. Linda Beck, President of SLO Village, said the group's "shared goal is to get the word out about resources that are available

A list of organizations and offerings is provided below. Programs are changing quickly to meet emerging needs, so contact the organization directly for the latest information.