

Bay Theater Put Up For Sale

By Neil Farrell

Mary Lou Jannopoulos has seen a lot in the 25 years she's owned The Bay Theater in Morro Bay, but changes to the movie business plus having to shutdown for most of 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic response, has her saying enough is enough and putting the last single-screen, storefront theater (sans parking lot) still operating in SLO County up for sale.

She and Jim Jannopoulos, when they got married, had a big blended family with his three young daughters and her two young sons. Over the years, all the kids have worked in the theater.

Over the years they owned 16 theaters, Mary Lou says, but when they met he was working as a "booker" for Fox West Coast, eventually becoming an owner.

His mother was in real estate for Fox and Mary Lou says she was the one who got him to leave a banking job for the movie business, which paid more money.

"When I met him," she laughs, "All the girls used to warn me, 'Watch out for Jim,' and I didn't heed their call."

The Bay Theater was originally built in 1942 by the Army Corps of Engineers, explains Heather Jannopoulos, Mary Lou's daughter, who handles the Internet side of the business, runs the projection equipment, and trains all the employees. She also keeps the books and Mary Lou says that with her and daughter-in-law Denise, the Jannopoulos Girls have been running the Bay Theater for the past 25 years.

They bought the Bay in 1973, from Ruth and Ted Morris. "She had been in the Follies," Mary Lou recalls. "And she was quite a poet. She loved the symphony and I had tickets to the Santa Barbara Symphony at the Arlington Theater."

Mary Lou was living in West Lake Village with the kids when they got the Bay and moved up here (Pismo Beach) in 1995, when



Mary Lou Jannopoulos and her family have owned the Bay Theater since 1973 but due to changes in the movie industry and the coronavirus pandemic's business losses, the family has decided to sell it, asking price \$1.5 million. Photo by Neil Farrell

their marriage was breaking up. Her son, who is a contractor, she says, built a second story atop the storeroom out back for Jim's office and he moved here. The front of the building had a small apartment that is separate from the theater.

But when she was ready to move north, the apartment was a mess. "Upstairs was horrible," she recalls. Her contractor son demoed

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Los Osos to Look At Districting for Elections

By Neil Farrell

The Los Osos Community Services District Board will look into possibly changing how its directors are elected in hopes of preemptively stopping a potential claim of violation of the State's voter equity law.

In a staff report for the board's Jan. 7 meeting, CSD General Manager Ron Munds, said, "The California Voting Rights Act [CVRA] allows for legal challenges alleging that an at-large system has resulted in racially polarized voting within a jurisdiction and seeking a court order that a jurisdiction convert to a district-based election system."

Munds told Estero Bay News that the CSD has always elected its board of directors through an at-large system, meaning that all registered voters within the CSD's service area are allowed to vote for all candidates in an election.

Switching to a district system would mean dividing the town into five areas and electing one director from each district. That could prove problematic for an agency that has difficulty getting candidates to run.

Indeed, the November 2020 Election had just one candidate for each of the three seats open for election, and so the County Clerk's Office canceled the CSD election and named each of the three people on the ballot as walk-over winners.

In recent years, Munds said, other agencies, mostly larger cities, have been challenged under the CVRA, with claims that the at-large system "has resulted in racially polarized voting within a jurisdiction and seeking a court order that a jurisdiction convert to a district-based election system."

Munds said, that "racially polarized voting" under the CVRA means: "Voting in which there is a difference, as defined in case law regarding enforcement of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 [52 U.S.C. Sec. 10301 et seq.], in the choice of candidates or other electoral choices that are preferred by voters in a protected class, and in the choice of candidates and electoral choices that are preferred by voters in the rest of the electorate."

"The methodologies for estimating group voting behavior as approved in applicable federal cases to enforce the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 [52 U.S.C. Sec. 10301 et seq.] to establish racially polarized voting may be used for purposes of this section to prove that elections are characterized by racially polarized voting."

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2021 Moving Forward: Jeremiah O'Brien, Loving Life as a Morro Bay Fisherman

By Judy Salamacha



Jeremiah O'Brien and his wife of 28 years Trudy O'Brien.

"For a man of the sea, getting recognition for work done in the boardrooms and public meetings would seem a little out of place," wrote then Bay News journalist, Neil Farrell, when Morro Bay commercial fisherman Captain Jeremiah O'Brien received the 2015 Highliner Award, as tribute from the National Fishing Magazine for his many years of advocacy for the fishing industry.

Among other accolades, he was also last year's recipient of the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce's Living Treasure Award, but he is the first to say he just happened to be

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County to Install Floating Solar Array at Los Osos Treatment Plant

By Neil Farrell



SLO County will install floating solar energy panels like ones shown here in Lake County in a wastewater pond at the Los Osos sewer treatment plant to cut energy costs and slow the growth of algae. Photo courtesy Annie Seacrest

County Supervisors last week approved putting in a floating solar energy plant at the Los Osos Wastewater Treatment Plant in an effort to cut energy costs and reduce harmful algae growth.

Annie Seacrest, the County's Energy and Water Coordinator, who has been very successful in getting several solar energy projects built at various county facilities, brought the project to supervisors, after trying for some time to figure out how to cut energy costs at the sewer treatment plant, which is located behind the Los Osos Cemetery.

"Unfortunately," Seacrest told Estero Bay News, "there isn't a lot of available ground space at Los Osos to begin with. The space that is available is set aside for preservation as part of the original environmental assessments

conducted when the plant was built.

"So, a ground-mount system, like the one at the County Operations Center [off Hwy 1], won't work. We also looked at a canopy system, like what is out at Dairy Creek Golf Course, but we don't really have a lot of parking lot space for that, either."

Even rooftop-mounted solar panels were nixed. "Finally, a rooftop system [we don't have any of these yet] wouldn't work because the available roof space was rather small and wouldn't result in anything that could help offset electricity costs. As such, the floating is such a great option for this site not only for the energy aspect, but for the trihalomethane prevention."

According to her staff report, the project would install a series of floating solar panels on a wastewater pond at

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City to Flip Tourism-Promo Switch

By Neil Farrell

With the specter of the coronavirus pandemic still looming like an ogre over literally everything, the City of Morro Bay is moving towards reinventing the way it promotes the community to the world.

The City is going forward with a plan to have the Tourism Business Improvement District or TBID form a non-profit organization and once again take over responsibility for tourism promotions, which the lodging industry has been funding for over a decade.

The TBID Advisory Board on Dec. 17 took a look at the City’s plans to back out of the promotions business, and return to the private/non-profit business model it had when the TBID was first formed in 2009.

City Manager Scott Collins has been the de facto staff person for the TBID, after the tourism director and her staff were laid off last spring following the Governor’s stay-at-home orders and the business shutdown that ensued, and continues nearly a year later.

With the State’s residents ordered to stay home, the city council decided to suspend promoting the town’s tourism industry in support of that pandemic response.

The shutdown has led to the City thinking about overturning the decision made in 2016 by a previous council to take the promotions in-house forming a new Tourism Department operating under the City Administration.

The TBID assessment is set at 3% of the cost of a room night, and is collected by motels, hotels, B&Bs, and vacation rentals within the City Limits. RV parks, which collect the City’s 10% TOT, are not part of the TBID at this time.

The rationale back in 2016 was to improve oversight over the TBID’s assessment monies, which the City considered “public money” and exert tighter control over the message and image being presented.

The TBID and the stepped-up promotions the assessments paid for, have been a big reason that the City’s transient occupancy tax receipts began a quick rise eventually to overtake sales taxes as the City’s No. 2 revenue source behind only property taxes. But the pandemic response has hit the lodging industry, indeed tourism in general, especially hard over the past 11 months with restaurants currently only allowed takeout service and unable to use dining rooms and outdoor patio dining areas that many restaurants spent lots of money creating.

When a TBID was first proposed, the goal was to increase the town’s occupancy rate to 50% and the extra promotions have done a good job in that regard.

But after seeing quick and steady growth, the occupancy rate leveled off, and yet the TBID and TOT totals continued to rise. This was attributed to increases in the cost of a room night and not to increases in the occupancy rate.

Collins said the TBID board unanimously endorsed the City’s return to the old business model, with the only discussions being about whether TBID funds should be used for “public improvements.”

“Some members thought that might be a good idea,” Collins said. “Ultimately, that was not part of the recommendation.”

The City has been trying to find more money for maintaining the infrastructure — mostly streets and sidewalks — and this past November voters handed them a new major revenue source.

Measure E-20 was a 1% sales tax hike within the City Limits that would bring in an estimated \$2 million a year (in a normal, non-pandemic economy) and voters easily approved the increase.

Starting in April, the City will begin collecting 1.5% in local sales taxes (it already had a half-percent sales tax, Measure Q).

There was no specified use for the E-20 monies but the Council had indicated it would be used to maintain public safety funding (police and fire).

There is still much to accomplish with the TBID

transformation, including a vote of the assessment district members on whether they want to make the change. That vote is weighted based on how much a particular motel or “property” contributes to the TBID; so a handful of large motels can steer the decision.

Collins couldn’t say if they have the needed 50%-plus one for the vote, but, “Anecdotaly, I have heard there is already at least 50% support at this time,” he said.

The City hired a consultant, Civitas for \$40,000 to assist with the change. The City Council will still have approval power for the new organization’s budget.

The plan is for the new entity to take over July 1 but what will the new promotions look like: “Not sure what promotions will look like then,” Collins said, “a lot will depend upon COVID.”

What’s the staffing going to look like? Collins said, “The new TBID will hire an executive director. They will not be a City employee. The Budget in the attachment indicates that employees will spend time both in Administration and Operations [i.e. marketing], so their time will be spent in both areas, and their salary will reflect that. I don’t know what that amount will be at this time.”

In 2020, literally every special event — large and small — slated for anytime after March 19 (when the economy was shut down) was canceled. Does Collins know what 2021 might be like?

“No large events are allowed by the State at this time,” he said. “When they will be allowed again is entirely dependent upon COVID.”

Whenever a group that puts on a special event has come to the City for guidance, there isn’t much to tell them. “When asked,” Collins said, “we tell them no events are allowed per State, and when they will be allowed again is anyone’s guess.”

The TBID made an immediate impact on the TOT receipts, as the City went from \$1.89 million in TOT in 2010 when the TBID started its work, to \$2.91 million in 2015, a 44% increase that equated to an \$888,000 annual boost to the City treasury.

CSD to Seek Water in Bayridge Estates

By Neil Farrell

Continuing its program to address seawater intrusion and shore up its water system, the Los Osos Community Services District wants to drill a new drinking water well under an old community leach field.

According to a staff report by CSD General Manager, Ron Munds, the CSD has been trying to site a new water well in the town’s “lower” aquifer for several years, and in 2018 took a stab at drilling a well adjacent to Los Osos Middle School, one of four sites that were being considered.

The test well work, Munds said, was completed in January 2020, “with disappointing results. It was determined that the geology of the area is not suitable for a community water supply well site.”

That left the agency to contemplate other sites, which is being done under a settlement agreement the CSD entered into with the town’s other water purveyors — Golden State Water Co., S&T Mutual, and SLO County — that is supposed to address extensive seawater intrusion that has stretched inland nearly to the Los Osos Library along the Los Osos Valley Road corridor.

The seawater intrusion is one of the nagging problems the town faces with its water supply, which comes entirely from a groundwater basin that is split into a “lower” and “upper” aquifer, separated by an impenetrable clay layer.

For decades, before the completion of a community sewer system in April 2016, the town was on septic systems that took water pumped from the lower aquifer deep below ground, run through homes and businesses, treated and disposed of via septic tanks and leach fields, into the upper aquifer.

And that groundwater is supposedly high in nitrates, which was the basis for the State’s orders to retrofit a

collections system and sewage treatment plant throughout most of the community.

And because the town relies entirely on groundwater, the County back in the mid-1990s declared a “Severity Level III” on the basin due to over drafting — which means the town takes more water out of the aquifer than rainfall can replenish.

So as a result of a lawsuit brought by the CSD, the water companies agreed to address the seawater/over drafting issues under a Basin Plan. Among the solutions is a phased approach to moving well production easterly, away from the seawater intrusion zone. Also, the plans are to tap that upper aquifer where the septage had been discharged for all those years.

Five sites were studied in an “Environmental Constraints Analysis” by the CSD’s consultants, Cleath-Harris Geologists, and two of them passed muster.

The sites studied included two sites on Sage Avenue, one of which already has an agricultural well; Andre Avenue; a former community septic system site that served the Bayridge Estates neighborhood; and a site on Ramona Avenue in a County right of way.

After the constraints analysis, the Bayridge and Andre sites rose to the top.

The district board in November decided to go ahead at the Bayridge Estates site, which is already owned by the CSD. The anticipated yield from a new well there is 80-acre feet a year, but the yield from the Andre Avenue site is 140 AFY.

Munds told Estero Bay News that the chosen site is bordered by an office complex at the southern end of South Bay Boulevard, the Sage Eco-Landscaping Company headquarters, and nearby homes.

Asked if he has concerns about contaminates in the ground water underneath an old leach field, Munds said the upper aquifer is 150-200 feet deep at the site and the new well will be drilled down to 650-700 feet.

“We’re going well below the upper aquifer,” Munds said. “There aren’t any water quality issues; the field has been inactive for about four years now.” In the end, Bayridge had the easier path to fruition.

He noted that there are still many steps to be taken before they actually drill for water, which he hopes can be done before the end of this year.

They still must complete the environmental review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), he said, and obtain a minor use permit from the County to drill the well.



Estero Bay News Staff

Dean Sullivan
Owner - Publisher
dean@esterobaynews.com

Theresa-Marie Wilson
Editor
editor@esterobaynews.com

Neil Farrell
Reporter
neil@esterobaynews.com

Joan Sullivan
Jill Turnbow
Ruth Ann Angus
Judy Salamacha



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The Bayridge site is zoned for public facilities and thus avoids needing a Coastal Development Permit (called for if zoning is changed).

“Per the Environmental Constraints Analysis,” Munds’ report said, “the site is the least constrained and, environmentally, is the preferred alternative.”

It’s also possible that a shallower well, into the upper aquifer could also be drilled and added to the yield, perhaps bridging the gap with the Andre Avenue’s yield.

The biggest challenge comes in the location. The new well site is outside the CSD’s water service area, Munds said, and they need to run a pipeline down to the system to connect it.

Munds said they have not worked up a cost estimate for the job but guessed that the new well could be \$750,000, plus a like amount for the pipeline, for a ballpark estimate of about \$1.5 million.

He said the District’s engineering firm, The Wallace Group, would design the pipeline project and Cleath-Harris would do the environmental reviews and permitting. Munds and the District Engineer Rob Miller would act as project managers, he said.

So far the District has invested \$24,100 in the project and has another \$8,000-\$15,000 in expected expenses including a survey for shoulder band dune snails, a protected species in town.

They also anticipate another \$10,000 to prepare the bid package that would go out to potential contractors sometime in the next fiscal year (after July 1).

And under another provision of the Basin Plan, Munds said a couple of years ago, the CSD drilled a new, shallow well at the District’s maintenance yard at the corner of 8th and El Moro, which to their surprise was not high in nitrates.

The water quality is good enough that it is being blended with water from an existing well that taps the lower aquifer, to meet the nitrate limits in drinking water standards.

Women’s March SLO
Going Virtual to Power
Up Democracy

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



Women’s March SLO is going virtual in 2021 with the theme Power Up Democracy. This photo is from the Time Is Now rally and march in San Luis Obispo on January 18, 2020. Photo by Brittany App

The message of solidarity remains, but the delivery is different. For the fifth time, Women’s March San Luis Obispo will return to rally, however due to the pandemic, the hour-long event will be held online on January 23, starting at 10:30 a.m. The theme for this year is Power Up Democracy.

“The goal of this particular rally, is to shine the light on what has been happening for the last four years and the ways in which democracy has been chipped away in the United States,” said Andrea Chmelik, Women’s March SLO’s communications director. “We also want to celebrate the election of Kamala Harris, the first ever woman vice president, because it is significant. We believe that all people who joined the Women’s March movement, the Me Too movement and the Black Lives Matter movement all

led to the fact that we now have an administration that will be much more diverse”

The recent storming of the U.S. Capital by thousands of supporters of President Donald Trump as Congress met to certify election results add to the importance of the rally.

“We’ve been through an event that was just never expected to happen in the United States,” Chmelik said. “One of the bases of democracy is the peaceful transfer of power. We had a free election. It was an election unlike any other because of the pandemic, but, based on all the evidence that we have, it was a free election where people have spoken and elected Joe Biden to be the next president of the United States. What we have been witnessing ever since the election is the undermining of that process. We do need to remain cautious and careful but not scared.”

The pandemic resulted in curtailed large gathers since spring of 2020 and in subsequent months saw even smaller get-togethers nixed due to the spread of COVID-19. Despite that, interest in the efforts of Women’s March SLO have maintained, Chmelik said.

With a new president and vice president heading to the Oval Office, the organization will continue the Power Up Democracy theme throughout 2021.

“We need to get together as a community,” Chmelik said, “because it always helps to see that we are strong. Together, we have the power to change the narrative, we have the power to build a democracy that is going to work for everybody, that everyone is going to be free to participate in.”

Whether it is a sporting event, concert or political rally, it is hard to replace the dynamic of in-person events but Chmelik said, “We will broadcast live on Facebook and YouTube so people will be able to interact and chat. We will be there moderating the chat responding to people and doing our best to bring up that energy. It is not going to be the same, but nothing is the same right now.”

The virtual rally features a lineup of speakers and performers who advocate for social, racial and environmental justice, which are topics central to the Women’s March SLO mission. Speakers include California Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis, California State Senators Hannah-Beth Jackson (ret.), Connie Leyva and Monique Limón, activists Courtney Haile, Patricia Solorio, Niya Williams and Chmelik, and California State Controller Betty Yee. Poet, activist and the 2008 San Luis Obispo Poet Laureate Dian Sousa will return for the fifth time with an original poem. Inga Swearingen, and Danya, Eliana and Liora Nunley will provide musical entertainment. Sign language interpreting will be delivered by Katie Voice and Shelley Lawrence.

Since January 2017, Women’s March SLO has organized over 60 events, in person and online, from rallies and marches for women’s rights, immigrant rights or gun safety, to town halls, to panels encouraging women to run for

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office, and more that were attended by more than 25,000 people.

In April of 2020, WMSLO started the virtual “Answering the Call” series, featuring women who are making a difference across the Central Coast and beyond. In May of 2020, WMSLO spearheaded #WearAMaskSLOCounty initiative, promoting proper wear of face coverings to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Organizers are asking for RSVPs for the Power Up Democracy to keep attendees informed about the event. For more information about the Power Up Democracy virtual rally, visit [womensmarchslo.com](https://www.womensmarchslo.com) or follow @Womens-MarchSLO on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. The event is free, but donations are welcomed at [https://womensmarchslo.com/mission-statement/](https://www.womensmarchslo.com/mission-statement/).

Pandemic Restrictions Continue

By Neil Farrell



The coronavirus pandemic in San Luis Obispo County ended 2020 in lockdown along with the entire Southern California Region after an alarming spike in reported cases that started in early December and has yet to wane.

Reported cases in the SLO County Jail have risen dramatically as well, causing the County to take special measures to combat the virus inside the lockup.

Meanwhile, officials in SLO, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties banded together to ask the Governor to remove them from the rest of Southern California, which has seen a run on hospital beds that reduced the available ICU rooms to zero-percent capacity.

But with no interest being shown from the Governor in forming a separate Central Coast Region, despite there being many ICU beds available here, the talk has switched to potentially filing suit to force the change and ease up on the economic restrictions choking the life out of local economies.

Cases Spike at County Jail

December saw an alarming rise in COVID-19 cases being discovered at the SLO County Jail, as dozens of new cases were found through testing infecting both inmates and staff.

On Dec. 31, Sheriff’s spokeswoman Grace Norris said in a news release that an additional 21 inmates had tested positive for COVID-19, a continuation of an outbreak that began Dec. 10.

“These new cases bring the total number of inmates to test positive linked to this outbreak to 41,” Norris said. “Eighteen of the new cases are from inmates living in a dorm setting where infectious spread is common. These additional cases were discovered as the jail continues to regularly test inmates for the virus due to the outbreak. Testing will continue until it is determined that this outbreak is over.”

He added that a correctional deputy and an additional inmate had also tested positive in the past 2 days but were unrelated to the outbreak inside the jail.

As of the end of December the County Jail’s Coronavirus numbers were 56 inmates testing positive for COVID-19 since last March, with eight patrol deputies and 14 correctional deputies also testing positive.

No COVID-19 deaths have been reported at the jail.

Vaccine Arrives in SLO

With COVID-19 vaccines developed under an accelerated schedule initiated by President Trump, and finally being distributed throughout the nation, SLO County health officials started giving the shots near the end of December.

In a Dec. 29 news release, County Health Department announced it was going to start vaccinating health care and community health workers providing direct in-person care, and who are at highest risk of infections, “in accordance with CDC guidelines.”

The first to be vaccinated were: paramedics and EMTs; dialysis; primary care clinics, health centers and jail clinics (including county jail and juvenile hall); Urgent Care clinics; home healthcare workers; intermediate care facilities staff; community health workers including social workers and mental health clinicians; Health Department clinicians and field staff doing testing; psychiatric health workers; specialty health care; labs and blood banks; dental workers; pharmacies; and staff at elderly residential care facilities.

If readers are in a high-risk category, i.e. elderly and those with medical problems like diabetes and high blood pressure, you will have to wait. “Other high-risk individuals in this phase, including older adults, frontline essential

NEWS Briefs

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Anti-Human Trafficking Forum

January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. The San Luis Obispo County Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force is hosting a 2-part educational Zoom presentation.

SLO County’s Anti-Human Trafficking Taskforce invites the community to join them for two Zoom presentations, co-hosted by the California Cybersecurity Institute.

The two presentations bring local experts together to define human trafficking, discuss how the internet is used by traffickers, and explain what is being done about it in SLO County utilizing local resources for victims and survivors.

The virtual event is on January 19 and 20 from 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. It is free. January 19 speakers are Dona Reed, victim advocate with the District Attorney’s Office, Danielle Borelli of the California Cybersecurity Institute. Survivor video courtesy of Treasures

January 20: speakers are senior investigator Camp, detective Bodine and sergeant McKim with the Counter Human Trafficking Team and local representatives from Central Coast Freedom Network, Freedom Calling, and North County Abolitionists.

For more information and to register, go to <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/District-Attorney.aspx>. If you have any questions, call or email Beth Raub at 805-781-5821 or braub@co.slo.ca.us.

Homelessness: Compassion and Action

The Los Osos Community Advisory Council (LOCAC) will convene an online community forum on Tuesday January 26 from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Hear from representatives of the County and local non-profit organizations about the current situation for unhoused people both in Los Osos, and in San Luis Obispo county; the services and resources that are currently available; and possible ways forward to enable those without regular housing to live with greater dignity, in partnership with the rest of the community.

Panelists include Laurel Weir, homeless services coordinator for the County of San Luis Obispo, Grace McIntosh and Cecil Hale from CAPSLO Homeless Services, Commander Stuart McDonald from the Sheriff’s Office, Rev. Caroline Hall from Los Osos Cares, Karl Blum, principal of Los Osos Middle School and representatives from several other non-profit organizations and County departments.

There will be time for questions after the panel presentation. Interested people send comments and questions in advance by registering for the event. To register, send an email to info@locac.info. For more information, visit www.locac.info.

New Planning Commissioner Appointed

District 3 Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg has appointed decorated U.S. Army veteran Kristina Spearman to serve as a County Planning Commissioner.

Spearman begins her term this month, serving on the County’s five-member Planning Commission. The commission reviews and approves tract maps, conditional use permits, and variances and makes land-use recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Spearman is a decorated U.S. Army veteran with 20 years of senior level federal service experience in planning and policy under the Clinton, Bush and Obama administrations and within the U.S. Senate.

She holds a master’s degree in public policy from American University, and is a graduate of the Harvard School of Public Health and Kennedy School of Government. Spearman also brings practical planning and building experience to the position. She recently completed a complex development project over the past four years resulting in their family home within District 3.

Dignity and Stanford Medical Working Together

Dignity Health Central Coast and Stanford Medicine are working together with the aim of enhancing health care for Central Coast communities.



The new agreement will build on the existing capabilities of Dignity Health Central Coast, Pacific Central Coast Health Centers in order to improve coordinated access to Stanford Medicine’s world-leading research and subspecialty care.



Stanford Medicine’s unique digital health solutions will play an important part in this collaboration, with the goal of empowering local physicians and meaningfully improving the ability to partner in the care journey of patients and their families. Patient care will be coordinated between the partners to ensure a more seamless experience, which will improve care, access, and services for patients and communities.

“With this partnership, Central Coast residents will gain access to specialty care physicians and services of Stanford Medicine — one of the nation’s leading academic medical centers — which will allow even more families to receive care closer to home,” said Scott Robertson, MD, Dignity Health Central Coast chief medical officer. “Our affiliation marks a significant step toward the development and provision of innovative health care on the Central Coast.”

Dignity Health and Stanford Medicine plan to share further details about the affiliation in the coming months, including information about specific clinical services, including oncology, heart health, neurosciences and more.

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workers, and people with high-risk health conditions, can expect to get the vaccine closer to March 2021,” the County Health Department said.

Indeed, the entire civilian population is going to have to wait. “As more supply becomes available, more SLO County residents will be able to receive the vaccine later in 2021,” the County said. “The goal is for everyone to be able to easily get a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as sufficient quantities are available.”

When more vaccine is available, the County said it would put out notifications on additional people who can get the vaccine and where they can get it.

By Jan. 8 the County said it had vaccinated over 8,000 people. Hospitals, which have gotten their own supplies of the vaccine, have been inoculating their own staffs, and, “CVS and Walgreens are starting to vaccinate long-term care facility staff and residents. The State is vaccinating health care workers at State facilities, including California Men’s Colony and Atascadero State Hospital.”

Everybody else will have to wait. “Following health care workers, other vulnerable populations and essential workers will likely get vaccinated in February or March as supply allows,” the County said.

More Vaccine Doses Coming In

Jan. 8, the County announced that it had received more than 12,200 vaccine doses, including first and second inoculations, and vaccinated over 4,000 people. Health care providers had dosed an additional 4,000.

The County’s vaccination rate had improved to 3,250 people a week or some 650 a day and the County is planning to open two more vaccination centers sometime in January, locations TBA.

“The County is rapidly progressing through Phase 1a of vaccinations,” reads a news release, “and anticipates being able to start vaccinating the next group of residents — including adults over-75 and critical infrastructure workers by February, maybe sooner.”

Stay-at-Home Orders Remain

Gov. Gavin Newsome’s stay-at-home orders that he doubled down on in early December were reaffirmed at the end of the month.

On Dec. 29, the County Health Department announced the Governor’s decision. “The State extended its regional stay-at-home order for the Southern California Region, which includes San Luis Obispo County.”

The area essentially from SLO County south to San Diego on the Coast and inland to the Arizona Border was moved back under the Governor’s Purple Tier in his “Blueprint for a Safer Economy” which has four of five regions statewide under the Purple Tier (meaning “widespread” infections) of lockdown, with just the Sierra Nevada Counties northeast of SLO County’s northern borderline in the less-restrictive Red tier.

The County has no idea when restrictions might be eased. “The order will remain in effect in SLO County until the region’s projected ICU capacity is equal or greater than 15%,” the County said. “State officials say this will be assessed approximately twice a week.”

Latest COVID Numbers

County Health officials announced on Jan. 12 that the total number of cases stood at 124,233 since last April 1 with 3,180 active cases and 10,911 people already recovered.

Forty-two people were in the hospital with COVID out of 369 available beds. There were 15 people in intensive care out of 53 total ICU beds.

Of the 115 deaths, 60 were people 85-older; 43 were 65-84; eight were 50-64; and four were aged 30-49. There have so far been zero deaths from COVID-19 among patients under 30.

Task Force Formed

The County Health Department put together a “COVID-19 Vaccination Task Force” to decide who will get the vaccine and when they can get it.

“The task force includes first responders [Emergency Management Services, the Fire Department, law enforcement], hospitals, bioethicists, community health centers, faith leaders, racial equity groups [NAACP, Promotores], disability service organizations, multilingual organizations, senior citizens, the un-housed, Transitions Mental Health

Association, and essential sectors, such as education, agriculture, utilities, and transportation.”

For updates on the vaccinations and to sign up for notifications, see: emergencyslo.org/vaccines, hit “subscribe,” to get the County’s updates and email lists, or follow the Public Health Department on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram to get the latest news.

For the County’s COVID-19 information, see: www.ReadySLO.org or call the recorded 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.

New Laws for 2021

By Neil Farrell



With 2020 thankfully in the rearview mirror, Californians are faced with over 300 new laws for 2021, as lawmakers in Sacramento apparently kept working even as their constituents were ordered to stay at home and locked out of their jobs and businesses for the State’s coronavirus pandemic response.

This is not new for the Golden State, as every year residents are faced with hundreds of new laws to learn about and learn how to comply with. Here are some of the new laws for 2021 taken from a report by Capital Public Radio:

- Senate Bill 793 bans the sale of flavored tobacco products, from vape cartridges to menthol cigarettes. The bill was reportedly passed after a nationwide outbreak of lung injuries allegedly linked to e-cigarettes and cannabis vape products in 2019. However, a campaign was launched to overturn this law via voter referendum, so its enactment has been delayed. Opponents have until Jan. 21 to get the needed signatures.

- SB 885 requires health plans to cover medically necessary treatment for all recognized mental health and substance abuse disorders, expanding existing coverage of just nine specific mental health issues.

- SB 1237 allows certified midwives to be able to practice independently, without a doctor’s oversight.

- SB 852 requires the California Health and Human Services Agency to produce and distribute affordable generic prescription drugs in partnerships with drug manufacturers. In essence, the State would enter the pharmaceutical business.

- SB 1383 gives workers at small businesses job protection if they take time to care for a family member, and expands the types of situations that are eligible for protected leave, including domestic partners, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings and your in-laws. It also expands protections to businesses with just five or more employees.

- AB 2257 exempts certain professions — musicians, writers, landscape architects and numerous others — from AB 5, the controversial law that affected the so-called “gig economy” — contract workers. (Ride share drivers won exemption from AB5 at the November Election.)

- AB 2992 expands the ban on employers taking action against employees who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or other crimes that cause physical or mental injury when they take time off for judicial pro-

ceedings or seek medical attention or related relief.

- AB 979 requires publicly held corporations based in California to include at least one director from “under-represented communities” on its board by the end of 2021. The law requires companies to add at least one board director who is African American, Latinx, Asian American, Native American, Pacific Islander or who identifies as LGBTQ before Dec. 31, 2021. California has some 674 publicly held companies.

- SB 973 requires companies of 100 or more employees to annually report pay data by gender, race and ethnicity. The bill’s author, State Sen. Hannah Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) said this was an important step toward “closing the pay gap.”

- AB 1185 allows counties to implement “sheriff’s review boards” or an inspector general to oversee the department and launch investigations. The boards can be set up by County supervisors or by countywide vote.

- AB 1506 requires State-led investigations into police shootings of unarmed civilians and, starting in 2023, requires the State Department of Justice to review use of force policies upon the request of local law enforcement agencies. State investigators must issue public reports on every case investigated.

- AB 1076 requires the State to automatically clear records for arrests that did not result in conviction after the statute of limitations has passed, and those around probation and jail once the sentence is completed. It applies to individuals arrested or convicted after Jan. 1, 2021.

- AB 685 requires employers to notify workers of potential worksite COVID-19 exposures, report outbreaks to public health departments and gives Cal-OSHA more authority to enforce pandemic safety violations in the workplace.

- SB 1159 creates a “disputable presumption” that death or illness related to COVID-19 is an occupational injury eligible for worker’s compensation benefits. The law covers COVID patients from July 6, 2020 to Jan. 1, 2023.

- AB 376 creates a “Student Loan Borrower Bill of Rights” that sets minimum standards for student loan companies and a student loan ombudsman “to advocate for borrowers.” Mostly goes into effect July 1, 2021.

- SB 346 is a 2010 law that limited the amount of copper that can be in automobile brake pads to 5% at the start of 2021, and 0.5% by 2025. It now takes effect and because of the rule, Chevrolet will not be able to sell its high performance 2021 Camaros in California.

County Seeks Mental Health Housing Grant

San Luis Obispo County is applying for \$20 million in State funding to help pay for three projects that would address housing for mentally ill people facing homelessness, but won’t know if they got the money until sometime next spring.

The money stems from 2004’s Proposition 63, that increased income taxes on those making over \$1 million a year; the “No Place Like Home” law signed in 2016 by then-Gov. Jerry Brown; and Prop. 2 a \$2 billion bond passed by voters in 2018.

This is the third round of funding and totals some \$43.9 million, and is aimed at “medium-sized” counties in California, according to a staff report. SLO County will compete with 13 other counties for the money.

The County in September asked for proposals under the NPLH program and got three, all in San Luis Obispo.

The projects used for the application were: an 11-unit complex of 2-bedroom apartments proposed by Transitions Mental Health; a 52-unit apartment complex with one bedroom and studio apartments, also by Transitions; and a 68-unit complex, with two, 3-story buildings proposed by People’s Self Help Housing.

“Of the total 131 units for all three projects,” the report said, “45 units would be NPLH funded, and other sources would fund the remaining costs for construction.”

These monies are “aimed at providing permanent supportive housing for persons who are in need of mental

Grant Continued on page 6



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News

SLO County Gets \$10M in PG&E Property Taxes

The largest private employer in San Luis Obispo County recently paid its first installment of property taxes statewide and the County got one of the larger chunks of money.

Pacific Gas & Electric announced paying more than \$268 million in first quarter property taxes, spreading the money over 50 counties where it owns property. PG&E serves some 16 million California customers with natural gas and/or electricity.

The company's chief financial officer, controller, and vice-president, David Thomason said in a news release, "Property tax payments are one of the important ways PG&E helps drive local economies and supports essential public services like education and public safety.

"This year's payments reflect the substantial local investments we continue to make in our gas and electric infrastructure to create a safer and more reliable system and to better mitigate against wildfires."

The payments cover from July 1 through the end of December 2020, and the first installment of what PG&E said would total over \$537 million by the end of the year on June 30. That's an increase of nearly \$28 million, or 5.5 percent, over the previous year (2019-2020), according to PG&E.

SLO County was paid \$10.39 million, landing it at No. 8 on the Top-10 list. No. 1 was Santa Clara County at \$33.32M; second was Alameda County, \$32.4M; followed by Contra Costa, \$21.49M; Fresno, \$18.27M; San Mateo, \$15.31M; San Francisco, \$14.83M; San Joaquin, \$14.83M; SLO, \$10.39M; Kern, \$9.77M; and, Sacramento County at \$7.02M to round out the top recipients.

As a contrast, San Diego County got just \$ 6,446; Lassen, \$51,276; and Alpine, \$80,500.

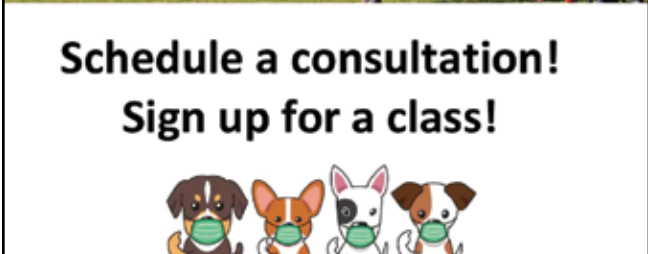

The company said it also provided \$17.5M in community grants "to enhance local educational opportunities, preserve the environment, and support economic vitality and emergency preparedness."

And PG&E is right now taking applications for its annual scholarship program for high school and college students, with more than 120 awards available totaling nearly \$300,000.

Two employee groups within the company — the Employee Resource Group (ERG) and Engineering Network Group (ENG) — provided the money for the scholarships, which range from \$1,000-\$6,000 each, and honor "exemplary scholastic achievement and community leadership," according to a news release. There are nearly 6,000 employees within the two groups.


A student's primary residence must be within PG&E's service area, essentially from SLO County to the Oregon Border.

The company said many past scholarships winners were the first in their families to attend college, and its scholarships are made more valuable this year after the



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country has suffered through the Coronavirus Pandemic and the response from government, including stay-at-home orders, distance learning in schools, and economic lockdowns that have crippled large segments of the economy.

"Our ERG scholarships," Mary King, PG&E vice president of human resources and chief diversity officer, said, "take on even more importance this year because some of our applicants could've experienced financial challenges due to COVID-19. We're proud to invest in these promising young people."

Since their inception in 1989, more than \$5 million in scholarships have been awarded to thousands of recipients.

"The funds are raised totally through employee donations, employee fundraising events and Campaign for the Community, the company's employee giving program," according to the news release.

PG&E ERG and ENG scholarship information, including criteria and applications, is available online at: www.pge.com. Applications must be submitted by Feb. 12 to be considered.

Updated Program for Tax Penalty Waivers

There is an updated property tax waiver program for San Luis Obispo County residents are delinquent in payment.

People can request a waiver from FY 2020-21 property tax late charges incurred due to COVID-19 hardships, said Tax Collector Jim Hamilton. This announcement follows information released in March announcing a waiver program for FY 2019-20 installments.

"Recognizing many taxpayers continue to face difficulties meeting property tax deadlines we have continued our commitment to provide relief where allowed under State Law," said Hamilton. "Prior to the issuance of orders from the State we designed a local waiver program for last year's installments. We are currently following State orders now in place. Taxpayers able to pay installments on time should do so, but this program allows more time for those who have been impacted by COVID-19."

State Executive Order N-61-20 issued by the Governor allows property owners to request a penalty waiver on their primary residence and also allows for penalty waivers for small businesses experiencing COVID-19 related economic hardship to avoid late-payment penalties for real property taxes due after April 10, 2020, through May 6, 2021. Taxpayers requesting waiver must submit a Waiver Request Form at the time they make their tax payment. In accordance with order N-61-20 all requests for a waiver of penalties and interest must be received by the Tax Collector with payments on or before May 6, 2021. Payments received after May 6, 2021 are subject to late charges.

Properties eligible for a penalty waiver are the taxpayer's primary residence or properties associated with a small business, including vacation rentals. More details and a Waiver Request Form are available online at www.slocountytax.org.

Taxpayers with questions about the waiver request process can contact the Tax Collector's office at ttc@co.slo.ca.us or by phone at (805) 781-5831, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Grant From page 5

health services and are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness," reads the report.

There is of course a catch. "The Health Agency will have ongoing roles and responsibilities," the staff report said, "including the requirement to fulfill a 20-year minimum commitment to making mental health services available to NPLH tenants, along with the coordination of referrals to other services, including but not limited to, substance use services.

"The selected contractor will be responsible for construction and management of the housing facility and would also provide an on-site case manager."

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Obituary

Fred Smith
1920-2020

If one were to pass by the southern outskirts of Cayucos, it is possible you may have looked up the side of the hill and seen Fred sitting in his overstuffed recliner gazing out his huge picture window keeping an eye out for passing whales, schools of dolphins or frolicking otters. Nothing gave him more joy than to enjoy all the beauty the Pacific had to offer. Well almost nothing (kids, grandkids, friends, etc, etc.)

Fred Smith was blessed to find love with two women, Virginia, who passed away after 32 years of their marriage, and then LaVerne, with whom he had 42 wonderful years. Between the two of them they had five children (Sandy, Steve, Mike, Denise, Tim), grandchildren, great grandchildren, five generations. Their home was always open to whoever wanted to drop in for a visit, a stay or just a getaway. Important to mention is his dearly loved semi-adapted son, Adrian Hurtado. A true blessing in Fred's life and was an invaluable friend in every way.

Throughout his life, Fred maintained a love for Jesus Christ and was active in church Bible studies, prayer meetings and other activities. He and LaVerne were much loved by everyone who knew them.

Fred was born Jan. 23,1920 and joined his beautiful wives waiting in heaven on Dec. 22, 2020. He grew up in Rifle and Denver, Colorado. He had two brothers and two sisters. In high school he was a talented gymnast and was offered a scholarship to pursue this talent but his older brother told him this was nonsense and needed to "hit the books" to get a real job.

The beginning of his career with the Fox Theater in Bakersfield, CA was soon interrupted by his call to active duty with the Coast Guard in WWII, but he returned to the Fox afterward. Fred somehow survived the Great Depression and had so many stories to tell about those years. He went through times of living in the dressing rooms behind the stage at the theater and, over the course of this job, met numerous movie stars such as John Wayne and Ward Bond.

Going back to school on the GI bill, Fred achieved a degree in accounting and a public accountant (PA) accreditation. He went on to work for Wayne's Dairy, W.B. Camp Farming and Kern Machinery, where he remained until retirement. He was a true asset to any position he held and was greatly respected by all.

It wasn't too long after he married LaVerne that they built the house of their dreams in Cayucos. They adored the weather, and Fred spent many days walking the beaches simply enjoying his life. And quite a life it was. Just shy of the age of 101, by 1 month, he simply had to settle for an even 100. Though he was extremely proud of renewing his driver's license until age 105.

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Community

Ecological Reserve Project Complete

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



Newly planted vegetation grows at the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve restoration site.

No matter how you look at it 2020 was a turbulent year, but there was some good news on the environmental front that might have been missed between the pandemic, the massive wildfires and political derision. A local project two decades in the making was completed and will remain long after the memories of current times.

Work is complete on a massive floodplain restoration project near the base of Hollister Peak in the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve designed to improve groundwater supplies, allow native plants to thrive and provide 4.8- acres of critical habitat California red-legged frog, steelhead trout, and other protected wildlife.

Historically, the land that had been farmed. Both banks of the creek were leveed and water had been diverted from the creek for irrigation purposes.

Efforts were done jointly through the Morro Bay National Estuary Program The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and their partners.

“We are so proud to see this important project completed and are excited to monitor the site over time to see how conditions improve,” said Estuary Executive Director Lexie Bell. “This project demonstrates the value of partnerships and shared goals – we can accomplish a lot when we all focus on supporting a clean and healthy bay.”

In 2001, the property was slated to be developed into a resort and golf course, but was purchased to protect natural areas and water quality. The land was then transferred to CDFW for ownership and management.

The project repaired a major source of erosion, and relocated 24,000 cubic yards of sediment to construct floodplain habitat, which greatly reduced the amount of excess sediment available to flow into Chorro Creek.

“The excavated sediment was transferred to an upland area adjacent to the floodplain and reseeded with native plants,” said Restoration Projects Manager Carolyn Geraghty. “Concrete riprap that had been used to control flows

in the creek’s side channel was taken off site and recycled at a local facility.”

Land uses that degrade vegetation around creeks and destabilize soils contribute significantly to erosion and sedimentation. These processes are causing the bay to fill in at a rate that is faster than would naturally occur, according to Estuary officials. The Estuary Program focuses on two main project types to address sedimentation – trapping sediment before it reaches the bay and improving upstream habitats to prevent erosion

The project also removed part of a levee system, re-stored and expanded the natural floodplain, and included a partnership with the California Conservation Corps, whose members cultivated and planted more than 1,400 native trees, shrubs, and other plants on the Reserve. A total of 33,600 tons of earth were moved during the project.

The Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve is located about four miles before Chorro Creek enters the Morro Bay estuary.

“This project is a big win for Morro Bay and Los Osos residents,” said Bell “It helps keep harmful sediment out of our bay and brings this part of the creek back to a healthy, natural state so that steelhead and other wildlife can thrive”

Originally, the Trust for Public Lands purchased the property for \$2.9 million. Additional costs include, the design phase at \$227,000, which was covered primarily by CDFW grant funds. The implementation (construction and planting) phase cost \$1.5 million and was covered mostly by CDFW grant funds, with additional grants from State Coastal Conservancy, and U.S. EPA. Restoration projects in areas such as creeks must meet a lot of permitting and species protection requirements, which can make these projects relatively lengthy and high cost, according to Bell.

Why was keeping the land under public ownership important?

“Public ownership means protection forever. It also



California Conservation Corps Members planted more than 1,400 native plants at the Chorro Creek Ecological Reserve. Photos courtesy of the Morro Bay National Estuary Program

means any restoration projects are given additional scrutiny to meet a very high standard,” Bell said.

Anyone hoping to hike out and enjoy the work are going to have curb that desire, the property is owned by the CDFW and has a special designation as an Ecological Reserve. Properties under this designation are not open to the public.



The construction crew lined up Willow stakes along the edge of Chorro Creek before planting them.



Reserve site where the restoration work was completed.



Workers temporarily diverted water from Chorro Creek to protect wildlife during construction.

As for the future, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program and project partners will continue to care for the 1,400 plantings through watering and weeding of the site over the next few years.

“We will also continue monitoring the flow of water through the creek channels to ensure that project objectives are met,” Geraghty said. “Further management of the upland habitats adjacent to the floodplain will also be important in a future phase of the project.”

Partners involved in the original purchase of the land included Trust for Public Land, Wildlife Conservation Board, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the State Coastal Conservancy, Caltrans, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, the Nature Conservancy, and the City of Morro Bay.

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Morro Bay Police Logs

- **Dec. 27:** Police responded to a motel in the 900 block of Morro Ave., for a report of theft, trespassing and defrauding an innkeeper, the perils of tourism realized.
- **Dec. 27:** At 8:04 a.m. police took a report of a hit-n-split in the 300 block of Dunes.
- **Dec. 27:** Someone in the 3100 block of Panorama reported their trailer was stolen. When police recovered it, there were of course items missing.
- **Dec. 26:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 3:42 a.m. — when all who venture forth are suspicious — in the 1000 block of Main. Logs indicated they cited the night owl for allegedly possessing a switchblade knife.
- **Dec. 25:** Police responded to a disturbance at 9 p.m. in the 100 block of Tahiti. A 36-year-old man was arrested for being crapulous in public.
- **Dec. 25:** Police responded at 4 p.m. to a disturbance in the 400 block of Mindoro. A 47-year-old man allegedly caused physical harm to a child and a complaint was filed with the District Attorney.
- **Dec. 25:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 3:22 a.m. in the 700 block of Harbor. Logs indicated a 29-year-old Bakersfield man was arrested for two warrants and a female companion, 33 of Bakersfield, was arrested for suspicion of drug possession and being UTI. Another case of arrive on vacation — leave on probation.
- **Dec. 24:** At 10:49 p.m. police got a report of a possible drunk driver on Hwy 1 at Gilardi Rd. Logs indicated they spotted the swerving vehicle and stopped it. The 62-year-old driver was nicked for driving in a fog, taken to the hospital for a bloodletting, and then he went to the hoosegow.
- **Dec. 24:** Police got a report about an out-of-state temporary restraining order being violated via email.
- **Dec. 21:** During a mail theft operation, logs indicated police recovered mail stolen from their victim plus other items suspected of being stolen, adding another name to their list of usual suspects.
- **Dec. 24:** Police and fire investigators took a report of suspected arson to a residence in the 600 block of Bella Vista.
- **Dec. 23:** Police in the 600 block of Driftwood arrested a 23-year-old woman for suspicion of illegally possessing Seroquel without a prescription in violation of the master criminal’s probation terms.
- **Dec. 23:** Police nabbed a 26-year-old woman for alleged credit card fraud. She was cited and released, no doubt part of the unofficial, catch-and-release job security program.
- **Dec. 23:** Police responded to a burglary at Albertson’s Market. Some industrious thief drilled out the locks and stole the money out of a filtered drinking water dispenser.
- **Dec. 23:** Police responded to a burglary in the 600 block of Main at The Skin Shop. No word on how much was peeled off.
- **Dec. 23:** Police responded to a domestic disturbance at 1:33 a.m. in the 3200 block of Main. A 33-year-old louse was arrested for suspicion of domestic violence and tossed into the dungeon.

- **Dec. 22:** Police responded to the 900 block of Piney Way to see a 46-year-old apparent pyro regarding a cooking fire started in the bushes of Willow Camp Creek behind Burger King on Quintana Road, which the fire department put out. At the same time they nipped a 50-year-old man for a drug-related warrant.
- **Dec. 21:** Police stopped a vehicle at 10 p.m. in the 1600 block of Main after it reportedly blew through a stop sign. The 54-year-old driver was nailed for suspicion of driving hammered.
- **Dec. 21:** A citizen in the 2600 block of Elm said his or her bike was stolen.
- **Dec. 20:** Police responded at 12:08 p.m. to a traffic collision in the 2800 block of Alder. No gruesome details were available.
- **Dec. 20:** Police arrested a 33-year-old apparent hothead at 1:07 a.m. in the 1700 block of Embarcadero for suspicion of felony vandalism and domestic battery.
- **Dec. 19:** At 9:15 p.m. at San Joaquin and Alder police cited and released a 25-year old man who had four bench warrants. The next day at 11 a.m. they stopped him on Quintana at Las Tunas for driving on a suspended license, a bit like netting fish in a barrel.
- **Dec. 19:** Police responded to another hairy crack-up at 2:15 p.m. in the 300 block of Quintana. No injuries reported.
- **Dec. 18:** Police took a report of attempted theft in the 300 block of Quintana Pl., at the “Hey Culligan Man!” store.
- **Dec. 18:** A traffic crash occurred at 8 a.m. in the 500 block of Quintana.
- **Dec. 17:** At 10:22 p.m. police cited another popular fellow, 57, at Lila Keiser Park with two bench warrants.
- **Dec. 17:** Police responded at 5:41 p.m. to quash a domestic disturbance in the 300 block of Fairview.
- **Dec. 17:** At 4 p.m. police responded to referee an uncivil dispute in the 2000 block of Main.
- **Dec. 17:** A 36-year-old woman apparently went to the police station to see about a felony and a misdemeanor warrant. She was cited and released with a sincere promise to appear, next time.
- **Dec. 16:** Police stopped a woman driving on Hill Street and cited her for knowingly driving on a suspended license, normally good for 10 days in the cooler.
- **Dec. 16:** Police took a report from Sacramento P.D. regarding a report they took of a rape and false imprisonment that occurred in Morro Bay sometime in late October to early November.
- **Dec. 16:** Police documented a traffic collision at 4:15 a.m. in the 1700 block of Main. No arrests were made.
- **Dec. 15:** At 10:30 p.m. police responded to the 200 block of Atascadero Rd., for a fellow apparently going wild. Logs indicated they committed the man to a 72-hour timeout with County Mental Health.
- **Dec. 15:** Police responded at 5:30 p.m. to the 900 block of Ridgeway for a report of a man who’d sent “inappropriate” text messages to an “un-wanting recipient.” The clown said it was all just a joke; police were not amused.
- **Dec. 15:** Police responded to the Fishermen’s Gear Storage facility by Morro Creek where a guy said some scalawag cut off the lock to his unit and stole \$680 worth of fishing gear. Police have no clues in the case.
- **Dec. 14:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 9:42 p.m. in the 200 block of Atascadero Rd. The 26-year-old dooper allegedly had drugs and paraphernalia on him and was cited and released to go replenish his stash.
- **Dec. 14:** A parks worker reportedly found a clear, Zip-lock baggie filled with Xanax pills laying on the bleachers at Lila Keiser Park.
- **Dec. 14:** Police took a report of a bicycle stolen off a front porch in the 2300 block of Main.
- **Dec. 13:** Police contacted a regular customer running amok at 2:10 p.m. at City Park. The 58-year-old woman was nicked for suspicion of getting tilted in public.
- **Dec. 13:** Police contacted a motley pair of knaves at 12:13 p.m. at Lila Keiser Park. Both had warrants and were cited and released continuing the insanity of the LE carousel. The day before at 8 p.m., a woman, 46, had three bench warrants and was issued her fourth. The morning of the 12th, they cited three other miscreants, 52, 26, and 36 all with bench warrants in the newly dubbed — Scofflaw Park.
- **Dec. 13:** Police responded at 9 a.m. to a reported vandalism in the 900 block of Morro. A 53-year-old man was arrested for suspicion of vandalism, petty theft, and trespassing “related to a crime occurring at a local hotel.”
- **Dec. 12:** A citizen in the 2200 block of Emerald Circle said letters and packages were stolen by some apparent porch

- pirate.
- **Dec. 12:** Police contacted at 9:21 a.m. a woman, 37, in the 2400 block of Main who had four bench warrants, and now soon to be five.
- **Dec. 11:** Police contacted a suspicious subject out at the suspect time of 3 a.m. near the beach on Atascadero Road. The 27-year-old model citizen was cited and released for suspicion of possessing drugs and paraphernalia.
- **Dec. 10:** Police contacted a parolee at 7:21 p.m. in the 800 block of Napa. Logs indicated the 38-year-old fellow was arrested for suspicion of being high on drugs, possession of heroin and an unspecified weapon. While police were on scene, a 51-year-old man rode up on a bicycle with no bike light and got stopped. The poor schmuck was allegedly also high on drugs and was arrested.
- **Dec. 10:** Police contacted a suspicious man at 4 a.m. at Coleman Drive and Embarcadero. The 47-year-old was arrested for suspicion of possessing paraphernalia, his stash no doubt gone up in smoke.
- **Dec. 9:** Police responded at 9:11 p.m. to a disturbance in the 2600 block of Main. A 28-year-old man was allegedly drunk and as a result suffered intoxifornication.
- **Dec. 9:** Police responded at 9:15 a.m. to the 900 block of Piney Way where some sinner tried to break into St. Timothy’s Catholic Church.
- **Dec. 9:** At 2:49 a.m. at Albertson’s on Quintana, police arrested a 24-year-old woman for suspicion of possessing methamphetamine and hypodermic needles. She was injected into County Jail.
- **Dec. 9:** An alarm sounded at 2:17 a.m. at a business in the 500 block of Quintana, apparently thwarting an attempted burglary.
- **Dec. 8:** Two people reported that their cars were broken into while parked at Morro Rock; the thieves taking personal items and a woman’s purse, as the tourist tax gets levied once again.
- **Dec. 2:** Police responded at 1 p.m. to the 2600 block of Ironwood for a Morro Bay felony — a 41-year-old woman was refusing to pay for a Domino’s Pizza.
- **Dec. 8:** Police responded to a disturbance at 10:49 a.m. in the 200 block of Harbor at the Bay View Lodge. A 21-year-old rookie was nicked for suspicion of being lubricated in public.
- **Dec. 9:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 2:17 a.m. that reportedly was speeding and blew through a stop sign at Atascadero Road and Main. The driver, a parolee, was arrested for suspicion of being schwacked on drugs. A woman passenger was arrested for possessing alleged counterfeit checks, fraud, possessing heroin and drug paraphernalia.
- **Dec. 7:** Police responded at 7 p.m. to a restaurant in the 500 block of MBB where some transient zhlub was inside yelling his fool head off. The raucous fellow, 59, was arrested for suspicion of disturbing the peace and belting the grape in public.
- **Dec. 6:** Someone reported a disturbing woman raising Caine at 12:30 p.m. in the 700 block of Moro Bay Blvd. The 58-year-old with a bell on every tooth was nicked for being drunk in public. It was her second incident in two days, as at 1:40 p.m. on the 5th she was contacted at City Park in the company of a guy wanted for an assault. She had two bench warrants and was cited and released back into the wilds.
- **Dec. 6:** Police got a report at 11:49 a.m. from the 200 block of Atascadero Rd., of “children arguing and fighting, as well as posting offensive statements through social media,” or it’s Saturday in Millennialville.
- **Dec. 5:** Police contacted a 46-year-old scofflaw at Albertson’s Market who had a pair of warrants out of Humboldt County. He was issued his future third warrant and released.
- **Dec. 5:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 12:30 p.m. at Main and Quintana. Logs indicated the 67-year-old woman driver was arrested on suspicion of possession of nitrous oxide and driving lifted.
- **Dec. 3:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow, 28, at 4:40 p.m. in City Park. He got popped for suspicion of being high on drugs and possession.
- **Dec. 3:** At 1 p.m. eagle-eyed police stopped a suspicious vehicle in Scofflaw Park, with a registration that expired 18 months ago. They towed away the rolling menace. Earlier at the park, they contacted a 44-year-old woman who had two warrants, gave her a third and went back on the hunt.
- **Dec. 3:** There was a minor fender-bender at 5 p.m. in the 300 block of Atascadero Rd.
- **Dec. 2:** Two cars collided at 5:09 p.m. at Dunes and Main. There were no injuries, however, a 20-year-old man was arrested for alleged reckless driving.

Alleged Stalker Jumped Through Window, Arrested

Police arrested a 46-year-old Morro Bay man on suspicion of stalking and vandalism after he allegedly burst through the window of his ex-wife’s home.

According to MBPD media logs, police were called to the 400 block of Fresno St., at 9:26 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 1 for a reported burglary.

The female victim reportedly told police that her ex-husband “trespassed into her residence, barged into the bathroom, [and] then grabbed her by the arm.”

The man reportedly went away “for a few hours” but returned in a flurry.

The suspect reportedly, “entered the house again by jumping through a large window shattering the glass into pieces causing property damage,” logs reported.

Police arrested Christopher Pacific Soto, 46, on suspicion of felony stalking and vandalism, and misdemeanor battery, felony burglary and public intoxication, according to logs.

Deputy Jumps Curb, Hits Tree

The California Highway Patrol is investigating a traffic accident involving a SLO County Sheriff’s deputy, the department announced last week.

The accident occurred at 12:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 5 at the intersection of LaJolla Court and South Oak Park Boulevard in Grover Beach, according to a news release.

“The patrol unit the deputy was driving hit a tree in the yard of a residence at that location,” said Sheriff’s spokesman Tony Cipolla, “which also caused damage to the nearby home. The Deputy was on a routine patrol at the time,” meaning that he or she wasn’t in pursuit of a suspect or responding to an emergency call when he side-swiped a parked car, jumped the curb, barreled through a home’s front porch and hit the tree.

The deputy was taken to the hospital via ambulance, treated for minor injuries and released. Cipolla said no one else was involved in the accident, which is being investigated by the Highway Patrol.

The name of the deputy was not released by the Sheriff’s Office.



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Police

Standoff Ends Peacefully

Sheriff's deputies diffused a tense situation in rural San Luis Obispo, getting a man with a gun to surrender peacefully and seek mental health treatment.

According to Sheriff's spokesman, Tony Cipolla, at about 1 p.m. Monday, Jan. 4, they got a report of shots fired in the 2200 block of Carpenter Canyon Rd., in rural SLO.

"When deputies arrived on scene," Cipolla said in a news release, "they determined an adult male subject had fired several shots at the tires of an unattended vehicle. The subject had then barricaded himself inside the residence at that location with two other family members."

Cipolla said they determined the man was "experiencing a mental health crisis."

Responding deputies called in the Sheriff's Special Enforcement Detail (SED), and behavioral health specialists with the Sheriff's Community Action Team (CAT) to negotiate with the man.

"After approximately 90 minutes," Cipolla said, "the subject walked out of the home unarmed along with the two family members. No one was hurt during this incident. The subject was not arrested."

The man, who was not identified, was placed on a 72-hour mental health hold and was evaluated and treated by mental health professionals, according to Cipolla.

The incident is the third in the past 3 months involving someone in mental health crisis wherein deputies were able to handle a tense situation without harming the person.

Templeton Thief Arrested

Sheriff's deputies arrested a Templeton man on suspicion of committing a string of thefts in that North County town.

According to Sheriff's spokeswoman Grace Norris, on Dec. 23 the Sheriff's Office started getting a series of theft reports from Las Tablas Road, Hawley Street and Cayucos Avenue in Templeton. Deputies out of the North County Substation in Templeton investigated the cases and on Dec. 30 they interviewed a possible suspect, Cody Smith, 18 of Templeton.

Norris did not say why they zeroed in on Smith, who was on probation and subject to search.

"Smith was on active probation," she said, "and was found to be in possession of several items of stolen property believed to be linked to the reported thefts."

Smith was arrested and booked into the County Jail on suspicion of theft, possession of stolen property, and prowling.

Norris said the suspected stolen property has been returned to some of the victims, however, "Sheriff's deputies are still working to identify the owners of some of the recovered property."

Anyone with information related to this case, or who has yet to report a theft in the Templeton area within the time frame, is encouraged to contact the Sheriff's Office at (805) 781-4550.



Cody Smith

Community

Cambria Chamber's Honorees

2020 CITIZENS OF THE YEAR

Judy and Miguel Sandoval were chosen as the 2020 Citizens of the Year for their outstanding service and dedication to the community. They organized, shopped for, stored and packaged bags of groceries for the Food for Families Program during the COVID Crisis. They also organized a volunteer program to help with the packaging and delivery of the groceries to grateful families during this unusual time in history. In addition they are active volunteers in the local schools, the Rotary Club of Cambria, the Cambria and San Simeon chambers of commerce, and the San Simeon Tourism Alliance.

The 2020 BUSINESS OF THE YEAR



The Moonstone Beach Bar & Grill was chosen as the 2020 Business of the Year for demonstrating integrity, consistency and commitment to excellent business practices. The Moonstone Beach Bar and Grill has contributed to the economic growth, stability and improvement of the area for many years. This local business also supports the many fundraisers and business events held in our community by donating and sponsoring. The owners, Kernn and John MacKinnon champion all business concerns and have often spoken in support of the business community.

2021-2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Alex De Alba, Eric Fredrickson and Marcus Link were newly elected to serve on the Cambria Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors for a two-year term. They join re-elected incumbents, Fidel Figueroa and Melissa Avina, along with returning board members Mel McCulloch, Miguel Sandoval, Steve Kniffen and Oz Barron. They will be installed at the Annual Membership Meeting.

Join the Chamber in recognizing all of the honorees at the Annual Membership Meeting by Zoom Tuesday, January 19 at 5:30 p.m. The Chamber plans to have a live recognition dinner when that becomes possible. Log in information will be available closer to the Zoom event by calling 805.927.3624.

Events and Activities

By Theresa-Marie Wilson



The Partners for the Conservation

of the Los Osos Coastal Dunes Endowment have created a children's art contest to create trail signs for messaging protecting habitat. There will be three winners of the contest; winners will be chosen by a committee based on the artwork that resembles animals/habitat from the Los Osos greenbelt best. The top three winners will have their artwork placed upon fences (symbolic ropes) to help keep people on the designated trails around the greenbelt and will be awarded \$200 each.

Submissions will be received from January 1st through January 25. Winners will be announced on February 1. Winners will be presented their award at the Morro Dunes Ecological Reserve on February 8. All art should be mailed to 326 Christina Way, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405. For examples of what might be seen photos of the greenbelt animals/landscape that may give the children some inspiration for their drawings can be found at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vbkm53a1scqnyuu/AABHXHI90v1X-KRvtYorJjV0a?dl=0>. For more information, send and email to michaelrtrillman7@gmail.com.



Pianist and Cal Poly Music Professor W. Terrence Spiller

will give a virtual recital that will livestream at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 29, and be available through Feb. 7.

The first half will feature Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's technically demanding and humorous Sonata in F Major, K. 332; Maria Agata Szymanowska's Nocturne in B-flat Major; and Maurice Ravel's "Sonatine."

"Szymanowska was a significant influence on Frédéric Chopin and other Romantic-era composers," Spiller said. "The inspiration for Ravel's 'Sonatine' was a magazine's composition competition. He would have won — as he was the only entrant — but his first movement was a few measures too long. It is a tribute to 18th-century elegance, style and structure."

The second half will be Sergei Rachmaninoff's "Moments musicaux," Op. 16. Spiller said the then-23-year-old Rachmaninoff wrote the piece rather quickly because he needed money. "The six movements represent a range of Romantic moods and styles and forms that feature special emphasis upon Rachmaninoff's coloristic writing, his lyricism and his virtuosity," Spiller said.

Tickets to the virtual event are \$5 and can be purchased online from the Performing Arts Center. To order by phone, call 805-SLO-4TIX (805-756-4849) between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.



Art Center Morro Bay presents Painting with Paper,

an online workshop with Lisa Agaran in a live online work-

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Community

Events From page 9

shop via Zoom

On Friday and Saturday, January 29 and 30 from 10-11:30 a.m.

Ever wondered what to do with leftover birthday cards, old textbooks, event tickets and out dated wrapping paper? Before you throw them into the recycling bin, take a second look. What is overlooked on a daily basis can be precious fragments in creating a work of art.

In this two-day workshop attendees will create an engaging piece of art, using paper as the primary medium. Learn how to pull together upcycle paper, vintage ephemera and handmade papers to create a piece that is tactile and artistically beautiful. Develop an eye for paper materials that can potentially create interesting backgrounds, shapes, textures and patterns.

Attendees will also gain an understanding of how to apply a sense of composition, color schemes to create cohesiveness and harmony. Learn the importance of layering materials from large scale to smaller, developing a sense of background and foreground. Most importantly, you will learn how to follow your creative intuition and have fun as your piece organically unfolds.

This workshop is appropriate for adults age 18+ and all levels of experience. The cost is \$45 for MBAA members or \$50 for non-members. For questions about materials needed or help attending this workshop online, contact Lisa by email: lisa.agaran@gmail.com.

Art Center Morro Bay, 835 Main St., has changed some dates for the "Flower Power" show to: exhibit, February 11 - April 5 and take-in Tuesday, February 9 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

...

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

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

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Poly and Cuesta Elevator Pitch Winners
Cash in on Innovative Ideas



Ross Levine

Two students, one from Cal Poly and the other from Cuesta College, each won \$1,000 at the Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship's (CIE) 11th annual Elevator Pitch Competition Finals, a fast-paced contest for Cal Poly and Cuesta College entrepreneurs, recently held virtually.

A third student, also from Cal Poly, received the \$500 "audience choice" award.

Ten students had just 90 seconds each to deliver their innovative business ideas at the November event. They were evaluated by a panel of judges on four criteria: how well the problem or opportunity was explained; whether the idea was innovative and creative; if the direction was clear; and whether the pitch was persuasive.

Cal Poly student Ross Levine's winning pitch was for Business Outsider, an online source for satirical tech and business news.

"There are all these satirical sources for all these different markets, but there wasn't one for tech and business," said the Redondo Beach, California, resident.

Levine's plans for Business Outsider include publishing what he describes as "a satire of a self-help book," titled "Winning the Race to the Bottom."

With the e-book now available in Amazon's Kindle store, Levine plans to continue working with his team to publish online articles.

"We're working on growing the team's knowledge," said Levine, who is pursuing bachelor's and master's degrees in industrial engineering. "We have a team of nine writers, and we're trying to get them to be as good as they can be."

Cuesta College's Elliot Thorogood won with his pitch

for Vision: First Step Photography, an innovative photography company that will allow students greater creative freedom in their yearbook portraits, inspired by Thorogood's own photography experience.

"We want to spice it up, allow for more creativity in the yearbook and give students a voice in their yearbook — because it's really their yearbook and their pictures," said the Nipomo resident who also attends the Central Coast New Tech High School.

Thorogood plans to invest his \$1,000 prize into Vision: First Step Photography and is working with his team to develop a plan to overcome the obstacles posed by the pandemic.

"We don't know if we can get it started this year — actually take the pictures — because of COVID-19," he said. "We're going to invest the money into the company and see where we go from there, and hopefully start (taking yearbook photos) at the end of this year, or next year at the latest."



Julie Arnett

Cal Poly's Julie Arnett, a business student from San Ramon, California, was the top pick of attendees. She pitched Celebrate, an online gift registry to allow users to create "interest boards" that friends and family can view when shopping for their birthday or holiday gifts

"I think that if I wanted to win one of the two (awards), I would have wanted the crowd favorite just because you have that validation from everyone," she said. "Feeling that support from the crowd was really awesome."

Arnett and her team, who have worked on Celebrate for almost a year, are fully engaged in the CIE's Hatchery program. They are currently in their product development phase, working with coders to develop their startup website

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According to the County’s report, spending these monies, “result in increased fish and wildlife conservation and awareness, rehabilitation, and habitat improvement as well as community activities that include hunter safety training and mentoring of young people. This is consistent with the County’s goal to promote a livable community.”

The Natural World COVID-19 and the Elephant Seals

Story and Photos by Ruth Ann Angus



Elephant seals, mom, dad and pup.

Being sequestered once again at home, the question was if COVID-19 going to keep me from viewing the elephant seals this year? I decided no — the best times to visit are during late January, April and October — but knew some real caution was needed.

The elephant seal rookery near the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse has been a major attraction ever since 1990 when the first sighting of a small group of seals was noticed lounging on the beach just south of the lighthouse. Right away people took risks trespassing through a cattle field and onto the beach to observe these huge sea mammals. Thought to be extinct for many years, a small group of seals were discovered on Guadalupe Island off Baja, California. All the elephant seals on the west coast are descendants of this group.

With the development of the Friends of the Elephant Seals and the construction of a viewing boardwalk, and docents to help, the public has been kept from entering onto the beach. The seals grew in popularity and are now a major tourist attraction. So, how to go and view them safely during a pandemic?

My solution was to choose the trail north of the main viewing area. This gives a much different view of the seals but if one wishes they can walk the trail all the way over to the main viewing site. I parked in the small lot and donned my mask, grabbed my camera, and began to walk. I was immediately greeted by a large crow landing on a fence post who demanded some attention. To satisfy the noisy visitor, I took his picture and went on my way.

The trail brought me along the rocky coast to the edge



A view of elephant seal rookery from upper trail. They lie like lumps in the sand.

of the upper beach where plump seal bodies lay in the sand. It was early yet in the season and no large males were in sight. December is the month that all the action begins with females giving birth to squirming black pups while one or more huge males guard them.



The alpha male is the beachmaster and gathers as many females as he can into his harem. Most of the time he appears to be either sleeping and/or flipping sand onto his back. But let an invading male of equal size venture out of the surf and it is time for a showdown. Males must fight to gain the right to romance. Why this is so in nature is beyond me, but it is spectacular to watch. This isn’t play fighting either. Blood is drawn and many a male goes the rest of his life scarred from the contact with the wicked teeth of his opponent.

Sometime after giving birth females are ready to mate



A female seal that had been captured and equipped with a variety of scientific apparatus for studying purposes.

again. Now the alpha bull takes advantage of his position to mate with the most females. Within a month after giving birth, females are impregnated. The female heads out to sea leaving her now plump, molting pup on shore.

The nice thing about this upper area is there are a lot less people so keeping social distance is easy. Also, you can choose to walk north over the hill from the parking lot and get a great view of the Piedras Blancas Lighthouse.

Many years ago, when I was doing photographs for some of the scientists studying the elephant seals, I saw a strange female seal coming out of the ocean. She was burdened by several pieces of equipment that were attached to her head and back with what looked like white plaster. This seal had been captured and equipped with a variety of scientific apparatus to study things like what elephant seals eat, what depths they dive to, and whether they are attacked by sharks. I felt a bit sorry for this gal because the other seals gave her a bad time nosing her off the beach and back into the surf. I guess they just didn’t like her outfit!

Don’t let COVID-19 keep you from viewing one of nature’s most interesting and amazing events. Wear your mask and keep your distance and enjoy one more thing that makes living on the Central Coast of California special.

Tree Planted at South Bay Community Library



A new tree was planted at the Los Osos Library, thanks to a collaborative effort of two local nonprofit organizations – Greening Los Osos (GLO) and the Los Osos Valley Garden Club (LOVGC).

The tree, a Burgundy Peppermint Willow (*Agonis flexuosa* ‘Burgundy’), was donated by GLO as an addition to the main pollinator garden next to the library parking area that was planted by LOVGC in 2019.

Members from both organizations participated in this event. Pictured are Tony Salome, director of GLO and Wendy McKeown, president of LOVGC. Readers who appreciate community projects such as this, are asked to consider donating to these organizations: <https://ecologists.org/welcome-greening-los-osos/> and www.lovgardenclub.org.

Supervisors Grant \$70K to El Moro Pathway

By Neil Farrell

County Supervisors approved spending an additional \$261,000 on non-vehicle roads projects and threw an additional sum towards the eventual building of a separated bike/pedestrian path connecting Morro Bay and Cayucos along Hwy 1.

Supervisors made the adjustments to the annual roads budget this year allocating monies towards a linear park in Los Osos, a pedestrian path in Oceano, and a crosswalk in Santa Margarita. Monies for such projects, comes through the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments, which is the gatekeeper agency for State and Federal roads funding.

The changes included allocating \$70,000 for the “El Moro Pedestrian Enhancements Project,” which will improve a dedicated walking path along El Moro Avenue in Los Osos, between 8th and 9th Streets.

It’s the third grant for the project with \$100,000 previously allocated from the “Safe Routes to School” funding and \$40,000 from “Urban State Highway Account” monies.

The Supervisors approved \$200,000 towards developing a pedestrian path in Oceano that leads to the town’s elementary school, along Paso Robles Street (from 15th to 17th). The County had previously allocated \$200,000 of Safe Routes to Schools monies for the project.

And they will take back \$9,000 they’d previously put towards improving a crosswalk on Hwy 58 at Santa Maria Avenue in Santa Margarita. Through negotiations with Caltrans and SLOCOG, the County was able to get the State to pony up for this.

And Supervisors also dedicated \$12,600 towards the

Pathway Continued on page 13

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Richard Otto in Baywood Park



Aerial photo of Baywood Park and Morro Bay. Photo: Sullivan Studios collection

Where is Baywood Park? In the 1930s and 40s residents in San Luis Obispo would say, “Let’s go to Baywood,” when they wanted to get to the coast. There was no Los Osos until the community voted for it in 1978.

According to the old timers – and I knew quite a few – the line of demarcation for the Town of El Morro, the legal name for Baywood Park, is from South Bay Boulevard westward to the Estero Bay, and from the Elfin Forest southward to Los Osos Valley Road. Richard Stuart Otto, a real estate developer and the founder of Baywood Park thought the name Town of El Morro sounded too much like Morro Bay, and so he named the area Baywood Park.

Otto was confident the area could be developed and he decided to divide the 25-foot (25 x 125) lots we have today. Otto was a visionary and, In his publication, Baywood Park Estates he advertised his lots. Otto’s published several of his 36-page pamphlet over the years. They were filled with photographs of fishing, boating and other activities along the Bay. He also photographed houses that were built in the area some of which are still standing.

Otto had his enemies too. I was told by the same old timers that Otto was quick to take back property if payments weren’t kept up. He had far reaching plans for the area and he advertised extensively throughout the State. Often movie stars would come to stay in some of the bungalows he erected. Guests would go boating and fishing as he advertised.

Bungalows were one-room buildings with bathroom facilities. A few of Otto’s bungalows can still be seen in the area, and I know where they are or were.

References: “All About Baywood Park” by Joan Sullivan and Baywood Park Estates by Richard Otto

Technically Speaking

Cutting The Cord



Many people have asked us about “cutting the cord” referring to ending their cable television subscription and switching entirely to streaming services. We tend to recommend this to most of our customers as it can save you a ton of money on your monthly bills.

Streaming services also typically offer much more control over what you watch and when as well as how much you are paying monthly. Not to mention the amount of space you free up when getting rid of that cable box! Services like DirecTV are cheap in the first year as a new customer (as low as \$40 a month) but increase as much as double after that.

When compared to the cost of Hulu Live TV which is \$55 a month with commercials. Hulu’s Live TV package includes most sports and news channels that were previously keeping users from making the jump. This service allows you to combine the convenience of on demand tv shows and movies (no more recording) and live television we all know and love. Take a look at Hulu + Live TV’s Channel package and you be the judge of what the better deal is.

We’ve been asked a few times about access to local



channels when making the switch, but we’re happy to inform you that Hulu+ Live TV as well as other similar services like YouTube TV are able to offer local channels in most areas.

To try and regain lost business from people deciding to cut cable, DirecTV has started their own live TV streaming service like Hulu, called DirecTV NOW (or AT&T TV NOW). It features two options, DirecTV PLUS and DirecTV MAX. The difference in available channels between the different services is not particularly vast, but certain services may have more channels that are more important to an individual than others.

We recommend doing some homework and choosing the service(s) that is the best solution for you with your convenience and budget in mind! If you have questions about this feel free to reach out to us for further explanation!

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

Pathway From page 12

When you are returning gifts and get stuck in line behind a diva

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“Morro Bay to Cayucos Connector Trail Project,” a “multimodal off-highway trail connecting the communities of Morro Bay and Cayucos,” according to the County.

The Connector Trail would run up the west side of Hwy 1 along the bluff top overlooking Dog Beach from Studio Drive in Cayucos to Toro Lane and the North Point Natural Area in Morro Bay.

The Connector Trail already has all the permits it needs and just awaits construction funding.

The County had previously put \$15,000 in “Regional State Highway Accounts” (RSHA) monies towards getting an “Active Transportation Program” (ATP) Cycle 4 grant” for what has been estimated to be a \$3 million project.

The most recent \$12,600 will be used to pay for applying for an ATP Cycle 5 grant.

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Fisherman From page 1

at the right place at the right time working with a team of the right men and women that got things done.

So how did our community get so lucky to have Captain O’Brien’s preferred port remain Morro Bay’s harbor? Look to Trudy O’Brien, the love of his life, teammate, and best friend. They celebrated his twenty-eighth wedding anniversary this month. This only a snapshot of their backstory, one that is storybook worthy.

Fishing was in Jeremiah’s DNA, but finding Morro Bay and Trudy was far from direct. Both his grandfather and great-grandfather were whalers in Newfoundland, but when his grandfather migrated to the United States, he worked for Westinghouse-Sturtevant in Boston as a tool & dye man.

“I’ve never seen it, but my grandfather’s invention is the Smithsonian,” said O’Brien. “It was his pump that contained the seepage so they could finish the Holland Tunnel in New York City.” His widowed grandmother became the sailor. “She cruised around the world several times, including on the Queen Mary.”

The drive to survive and succeed, O’Brien learned from his mother. “Mom was a tower of strength.”

Life changed one summer vacation when his dad was killed in a fluke car accident caused by another driver — his mother was seriously injured. “We kids (four brothers) were farmed out to various relatives for one-point-five years while Mom was mostly in the hospital. We saw her sporadically. A [former] teacher at Boston Clerical School before WWII, once out, she started a bookkeeping and typing business while still confined to a wheelchair. This business allowed her to eventually buy a home and unite our family. Her strength and determination for us was unparalleled.”

O’Brien’s first career began in Boston building high-rises as a sheet metal worker. His passion for skiing drove him to years spent as a “ski bum.” He moved to Mt. Washington, New Hampshire. “It has the worst weather in the country with Guinness Book winds recorded at 238 knots.” For six years, he earned his lift tickets while working his way up to managing the dining room at a ski resort.

“Ski bums,” he admitted, “move around.” About 1977 friends discovered new thrills skiing higher mountains in California and lured him westward with promises of a job and housing. His first California adventure was in Bishop/Mammoth Lakes.

“Within six hours I was out of a job and a place to live,” Jeremiah recalled. “My friend was a bartender who loved to buy drinks for folks. He poured me a few, and then others, as hours passed. I noticed this sober guy quietly watching. When I asked my friend who he was, he said he was his boss.”

His friend was fired and O’Brien learned what it meant to be homeless for three months. Desperation or inspiration jump-started his next career. While tipping a few with his friend, Rick Contreras, he over-heard, “They never show up to get the job done.’ It was a hot market for condo-building. “I asked Rick if he’d installed sheet rock. He even had the tools so I stood up and introduced ourselves as Red

Stone Drywall and said we’d show up, but didn’t scrap or haul rock away. Maybe we made twelve-cents per foot, but we had lots of work. The college kids would come to town, kick in the walls. We’d fix and had time to ski between jobs.”

His wanderlust took him to Tahoe. “I was living right on the lake at North Shore with a lady-friend and managing a restaurant. It was pretty cool.” Eventually O’Brien got tired of the life — the reciprocal gambling and drinking after work and skiing.

About 1980, a friend of his lady-friend was expanding her Aspen bar business to “a little town on California’s Central Coast.” The couple moved to Morro Bay to manage her newest acquisition, MooseJaws. Today’s locals know the property as the former Buoy Bar and current Dark Nector Coffee Saloon. She renamed it Brown’s.

“It was fondly called Bloody Brown’s for good reasons,” said O’Brien. “When they tore down the Cloisters Hotel, the owner had the dance floor moved over. It was an amazing Bird’s Eye Maple; cost her lots to refinish it. Everyday when the sun hit it, the shine would blind me so I couldn’t see who I was serving.” Besides breaking up a few-to-many fights, he admitted he and the owner “never saw eye-to-eye,” so he was out of work again.

Next he worked on a ranch on Little Morro Creek owned by Sophie Erden, then owner of the Hungry Fisherman. But more important he found his love for fishing while rooming with Randy Kann. “Fishing with Randy was instant love for the industry. You might say I was hooked.”

They also worked for Harold Davis, who built Radon boats. “Mike Radon built abalone dive boats famous throughout California and Oregon.”

In 1983 Kann and O’Brien built Morro Bay Harbor Department’s patrol boat. The department is currently fundraising to replace it. “We knew where it was going, so we built it exceptionally good for Harbor Master Jim Funk.” But he hopes all will donate to the fund to replace it.

Eventually he got his own boat often crewed with Trudy. They reconnected about 1985. “I was selling fish at Gold Nugget Seafood. Trudy worked there. We were invited to the owner’s wedding. She asked who I was taking to the wedding. It was like our first date. She lived on one side of Morro Bay and I the other. She kept leaving a things at my house, so I said either they go or you need to move in.”

Morro Bay is Captain O’Brien’s base, but he has fished every port on the west coast from San Diego to Ilwaco, WA. He’ll name them for anyone who asks and does name them in order. “We’ve had a succession of the best harbor masters and staff in this department for so long. I’ve worked with all these harbor masters and Morro Bay’s are a cut above the rest.”

For ten years Captain O’Brien served as president of the Morro Bay Commercial Fisherman’s Organization (MBCFO). The group paid \$390,000 to fund the dock’s mega ice machine project, but he wants the community to recognize it was Harbor Master Rick Algert, who doggedly worked to complete the million-plus project when it had to re-engineered for future earthquakes.

In 2010, Captain O’Brien joined a group to testify before Congress. “They were trying to kill the industry I love.”

His advocacy continues as a director for the group he helped to create, the Morro Bay Commercial Quota Fund (MBCQF). Today the group helps sustain Morro Bay’s fishing village economy showcasing a unique and vibrant working waterfront.

And although Captain O’Brien continues to fish albacore, salmon, and swordfish in other ports six months of every year, he continues to stay actively involved on Morro Bay’s Harbor Advisory Board and the Chamber of Commerce’s Governmental Affairs Committee. Captain Jeremiah and Trudy are also active members of MBCFO and founding members of the Morro Bay Maritime Museum (MBMM). MBCFO is currently working to document the fishing industry’s contributions for the museum’s latest exhibit.

Bay Theater From page 1

everything down to the studs in the walls and rebuilt it.

“Someone could live up here,” Mary Lou says of the apartment. There’s also an office and the projector room is up there, too. When Jim got ill, Mary Lou says, she agreed to take over the business.

“Thank God I had my son and daughter-in-law,” Mary Lou says. “I had never really worked.” Her job was raising the children and when Jim died, the Bay was the only theater left.

“It’s been a great little business,” says Mary Lou. But when she took over, it was in rough shape, with sticky floors, icky carpet and torn up seats. “The screen was torn,” Heather says. “People called it ‘The Pitt.’”

“The first thing I could see was the electrical system was bad,” Mary Lou says. “You could see sparks. It cost \$50,000 to do the electrical but it had to be safe.”

Over the past 25 years, she has put a lot of hard work and money into the theater, including twice buying new

seats and fixing another serious problem in 2012 when they discovered a water pipe — from 1942 — was leaking under the cement floor and causing the floor to swell. That led to tearing out the lobby floor, as well as the sidewalk out front, and upgrading the restrooms to be handicap accessible.

They originally bought used seats from Festival Theater to replace the old ones. “We had to power wash all of them,” says Mary Lou.

The new seats recline with fold-up armrests and cost \$250 each. There are 314 seats in the theater, which also has empty spots where wheelchairs can park.

“A friend in the business said I should buy cheap seats and change them every 5 years,” Mary Lou says, “but that didn’t make any sense to me.”

They also had to buy a new digital projector that cost \$75,000. Mary Lou shakes her head when asked about her asking price of just \$1.5 million for the theater?

“That’s why there is so much activity [with potential buyers],” she says, “Because I’m practically giving it away.”

The Bay Theater should sell quickly, not just because of the low price, but because it is truly in great shape, “turn key” as all three Jannopoulos girls say.

Mary Lou acknowledged how much the little theater has meant to the community.

She’s proud of being able to hire so many young people over the years; many of whom have come back to the theater with their families.

Over the years, she says, many of her young employees, who had strict work rules like “Don’t be late for work,” have gone on to do great things. She recalls running into a young woman, “Stephanie,” who had worked for her years ago and is now selling homemade soups at a café across the street. They met at Costco and she told Mary Lou, “You and your family taught me so much.’ She wasn’t organized in her life, but with us she had to be on time and learn to get along with co-workers. And it all started at the Bay Theater. That was a nice tribute.”

The movie business has changed a lot with longer mandatory runs for movies, to larger cuts of the take, to the most recent practice of simultaneously releasing big-budget movies into theaters and streaming services.

“If they simultaneously release films to streaming and theaters,” Denise says, “you will get half the business you would normally get.”

Heather says, “Some movies you need to see on the big screen,” in reference to watching a big blockbuster on a 6-inch phone.

Mary Lou says she’s told people who’ve asked, “We’re not throwing in the towel. I can’t get films.”

But even the few films that have seen theatrical release during the 11-month coronavirus shutdowns the movie companies now take 65% of the take. Denise says that for a long time the take was 35%, which was low enough to still make a profit. “This has been going up for a long time,” she says, “it was 35% 10 years ago.”

The movie companies are also requiring films have longer runs. “They say you’ve got to have it for this long,” Denise explains, “for this percentage and for a minimum of four weeks.”

“In this small town,” Mary Lou says, “three weeks is hard for us.” Plus employee costs have been on the rise and the local business taxes, utilities and a health department permit (for the concession stand) have gone up.

“The health department permit used to be \$50, and now it’s \$300,” says Mary Lou. “It’s the same thing with the City business tax.”

None of these bills has been suspended or reduced during the pandemic and Mary Lou says she’s had to dig deep into her personal savings to keep it going.

At one point, they were going to reopen and had figured out the seating arrangements to socially distance the audience but at 25% capacity, it would have cost more to run the films, and then they couldn’t get films to show.

The theater has a 12-foot wide stage that is mostly hidden by the screen. Perhaps new owners will look into expanding into live music and plays, but Denise cautions that the movie companies also require theaters to be open daily and run their films every day, which could limit the available time for live shows.

It’s been a good life for the Jannopoulos girls. “As a family running it,” Mary Lou laughs, “we didn’t get rich, I can tell ya.”

She says the theater was very profitable up to 2020, and over the years, they’ve put much of the money back into the business, toward achieving her goal of providing the community a theater they can be comfortable in and proud of.

Mary Lou hopes that whoever buys it will keep it as an entertainment venue. “It breaks my heart to have to sell it,” she says. “I hope it’s kept as an entertainment source. We’ve spent all these years here. I’ve loved it.”



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Solar Array From page 1

the plant. That pond holds rain runoff and plant overflow treated wastewater.

The project would be installed on approximately 1.6 acres of the recycled water ponds at the facility. “The Facilities Planning Division is responsible for overseeing the efficient and fiscally responsible management of energy use at County of San Luis Obispo facilities,” Seacrest said in her report. “The Utilities Division is responsible for the administration and operation of safe and reliable potable and non-potable water systems such as the LOWRF (Los Osos Water Recycling Facility).

“This site was determined to be an excellent candidate for a renewable energy project due to the high energy costs of operating an energy-intensive facility and a need to maintain and improve recycled water quality.”

The County has been looking for a renewable energy project at the plant since late 2017, just over a year after the plant went on line in April 2016. In the end the County decided a floating system would work and potentially head off another troublesome problem with such ponds, the proliferation of algae growth and production of harmful, though naturally-occurring bi-products.

“Towards the end of 2018,” Seacrest said, they “determined a floating solar system could not only significantly offset energy consumption, but also reduce the amount of physical and chemical maintenance of the recycled water and greatly improve the water quality.”

The County identified three benefits from the solar floats — cutting energy costs, improving water quality for recycling, and reducing water loss by evaporation.

“The LOWRF is one of the County’s top five energy consumers,” Seacrest said, “so the primary benefit of installing the floating solar array will be reducing energy costs by offsetting energy consumption. This will demonstrate a responsible use of ratepayers’ dollars by providing an opportunity to use the electricity savings towards LOWRF’s ongoing operations and maintenance needs.”

She added that the solar arrays will cut gas emissions, and support SB 350, the State’s clean air and greenhouse gas reduction law.

Since the floats will cover a large part of the water pond, it cuts the available surface area and should inhibit algae growth. And algae growth leads to the formation of “trihalomethane,” a bi-product of chlorine reacting to organic compounds in water, she explained.

“The proposed floating array,” she said, “will decrease the pond’s water temperature by blocking the sunlight, two major factors of algae growth. The reduction of algae growth in the pond will reduce the overall solids concentration, which reduces the production of trihalomethane.”

So is trihalomethane a problem at what is still a relatively new plant? Seacrest said, “It’s something that happens with facilities such as this. Reducing the amount of algae growth in the pond will also reduce the overall solids concentration, which reduce the production of trihalomethane. Currently, the plant spends money on efforts to combat the trihalomethanes. By covering a significant portion of the area exposed to sunlight, the algae growth should significantly decrease, as should the use of chemicals to treat the trihalomethane.”

The floats will also slow evaporation losses, which Seacrest estimated at 4.68-acre feet a year, and is due mostly to wind, a prevalent factor through Los Osos Valley for much of the year.

And perhaps most important to Los Osos residents within the assessment district, who foot the bill for this plant and the collection system, is that it won’t cost them anything.

As with the solar farm on Hwy 1, the County is entering into a partnership with a private energy company, which will pay for the equipment, install it, and then operate and maintain it, charging the County a set price for the energy.

The company, Floating Solar Solutions SLO County I, LLC (FSS for short) will pay for the over \$3 million facility, which is what Seacrest said it would probably cost the County to build.

The business arrangement is called an “energy service agreement,” and it’s the same arrangement that was made at other County facilities solar and battery projects are being installed.

“The price per kilowatt hour we are proposing to enter with FSS will cover the costs of the system, including engineering, construction, etc.,” Seacrest told EBN. “As

such, we don’t pay any upfront costs for the system. FSS is responsible for the production, operations, and maintenance of the system for the duration of the contract. Once again, we ensured the County would have some security built into the contract by stipulating production output and minimum performance guarantees.”

In her staff report, Seacrest broke down the costs to the County and the savings to be had. The set new energy rate is 15¢ per kilowatt with the plant currently paying Pacific Gas & Electric 17¢ a KW.

In 2019, the plant used 1.59 million kilowatts costing \$280,300. In year one the floating solar panels will produce 1.23 million kilowatts and cost \$185,800. Add in \$62,500 to PG&E to make up the difference and the total energy bill in year one is \$248,400, a savings of \$31,900.

Over the solar farm’s 25-year life the County expects to save \$3.14 million, according to Seacrest’s figures. This assumes a 3% per year increase in utility costs, however, in 2019, PG&E’s rate hike was 4.99%, she added.

As part of the Supervisors’ approval, Seacrest and the County will have to ask the U.S. Department of Agriculture for permission to lease the pond site to FSS for the solar array, which Seacrest said was mostly a formality.

USDA loaned the Los Osos Wastewater Assessment District the money to build the project through a rural assistance program, which took an act of Congress to achieve, a feat accomplished by former Congresswoman Lois Capps. Such funding is normally limited to communities of less than 10,000 population.

The project is one of a series of recent accomplishments for the County which installed solar energy systems at Dairy Creek Golf Course; the Hwy 1 solar farm; the County Health and Behavior Health Agencies on Johnson Avenue in SLO; and will be installing Tesla battery systems at three County water system facilities, designed to keep them working in the event of public safety power outages by PG&E.

Elections From page 1

He added that moving to a district-based election system is considered the “safe harbor” under the CVRA “that prevents a CVRA lawsuit alleging the dilution of protected class voting strength.”

He told EBN that the idea for the agenda item was to prevent someone from filing a claim in court for a violation of the CVRA, which he said comes with an automatic \$30,000 bill for plaintiff’s attorney fees.

He explained that “protected” class of voters is in essence minority voters — mainly Hispanic and Black — defined by race.

“It’s an extension of the Federal Voting Rights Act,” Munds said of the CVRA, “but California takes it a step further.”

What’s resulted in such challenges is a situation as was evident with the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA, wherein law firms sought out disabled clients that would visit businesses in a town to check for compliance with the ADA.

When an establishment was deemed to be in violation, claims with the businesses were filed and were mostly settled out of court for relatively small amounts of money, but also included agreements that restrooms would be upgraded.

That practice has died down considerably now, but SLO County saw a slew of such claims filed in 2005 by a law firm through a Calabasas man.

The CSD has known about the CVRA for some time and Munds said their plan was to wait for the 2020 Census data to come out before deciding on whether to change the voting system.

But a demand letter was sent to the City of Arroyo Grande, he said, which prompted the Oceano CSD into passing a Resolution as a way to protect itself.

The CSD passed Resolution No. 2021-01, which calls for the CSD to investigate the matter for a potential change in the election system, and Munds said it should protect against a claim being filed.

“The Resolution is to avoid a demand letter,” Munds explained. Once the 2020 Census data is released, the CSD plans to hire a demography consultant to look at the data and decide if there are any concentrations of protected voters in town that are being discriminated against with at-large voting.

A resident of Los Osos for over 40 years, Munds said in

his experience there are not concentrations of those voters in any given area of town.

“Filipinos are the highest numbers next to Caucasian,” he said. “But they’re pretty well dispersed. Our neighborhoods are fairly well integrated.” There are also many Hispanics in town but they too seem to be dispersed across the community.

But without at least looking into the issue the CSD could be vulnerable and “it would be up to us to prove them right or wrong.”

While State Law caps the initial costs at \$30,000, fighting such a claim can run into the millions.

Munds said the City of Santa Monica fought such a claim in court and while it won, it also spent \$8 million. That decision is being appealed, too.

“A lot of agencies have tried to challenge it and lost, except for Santa Monica,” Munds said. “But they had to expend a tremendous amount of money.”

So when the Census data is released, which he said could be this summer, they will delve into the matter.

“If we’d done this before the 2020 Census,” he said, “we’d have to do it all over again.”

Studying the issue does not mean making the change will necessarily follow. “This is not to say that we are going to do district voting,” he said.

Should their demographic study show there are not pockets of protected class voters, and therefore no change is needed, it should protect the District from getting a demand letter and the \$30,000 attorney’s bill that comes with it.

And if the study does show protected voters being diminished, the next challenge would be how to divide the town into voting districts.

The CSD would have to hire someone to draw up district lines in the community, which Munds said would be along population lines and not area.

That consultant could run up to \$20,000 and then they would have to pay the County Clerk to set up the voting districts, which Munds said he has no idea of how much that could cost. “It’s not cheap,” he said, “but it’s the law and it’s the right thing to do.”

How such district lines would be drawn cannot take into account where each of the incumbent office holders actually lives, which is akin to Gerrymandering, and against the law. So the CSD could wind up with more than one director in a newly-drawn district pitting them against each other in the next election.

And, Munds asked, “What if no one [in a district] runs? What happens then?”

As with the last election, candidates for the CSD, ensuring contested elections, are scarce. “This is going to be a challenge for any small district,” he said.

Several years ago, one CSD director had to resign because he moved outside the District’s service area. The other board members chose a replacement, who then had to run at the next CSD election.

Munds said while the town is divided into neighborhoods — for example, Cabrillo Heights, Sunset Terrace, Baywood Park and Cuesta-by-the-Sea among others — “We have to be more scientific than that,” Munds said. The stakes are potentially high.

“We’re not a very rich district,” Munds said. “We have to be very careful. The courts have been very protective of protected classes of voters.”



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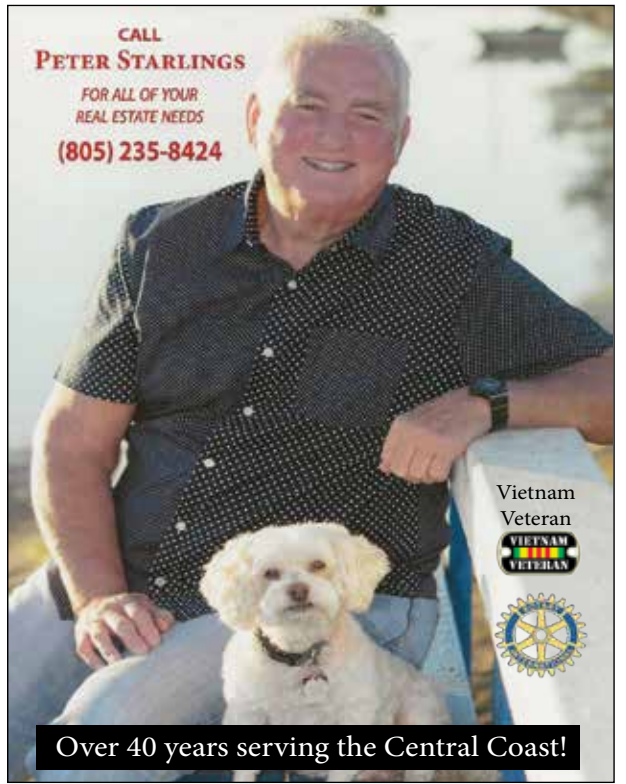
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