

## Community Fundrasier Brings Them Out To Play



James Scoulis, Bill Baxmeyer and Jim Conroy, also know as Burning Bad & Cool, were just one of the 12 bands playing at Nifty's Merrimakers in Baywood Park on Saturday, February 10, at a fundrasier for local guitarist Bruce Willard. Photo by Dean Sullivan

A benefit concert was held for medical expenses to help Bruce Willard, the bassist for several local bands including Dr. Danger, Robi's Narrow Bridge, Anam Cara, The Mojo Combo, The Three Muskrat Ears, and Hey Mikey! The Melvin Brucifer Show.

Bruce suffered a major cardiac event in December and about 500 friends and fans came together at Nifty's Merrimaker in Baywood to raise more than \$11,000 during the 12-band event.

The goal of the concert was to raise money to gift

Bruce a backpack oxygen concentrator so he can be more mobile and continue to work as a musician. Any money raised in excess will be given to Bruce to use for other expenses.

"The place was packed," said event organizer, Deborah Tullos. "The support of the community for Bruce Willard was amazing. So many people love him, even people that didn't even know him showed up to support him. We will definitely be able to afford the oxygen concentrator and all the accessories — he will need to be on oxygen the rest of his life."

## Moving Forward: A New Central Coast Community Nature Journaling Together

By Judy Salamacha

A rare experience is coming to Los Osos. Are you curious on your nature walks and want to learn more about what you are seeing and hearing around you? Are you someone who likes to write and sketch when out and about on our beautiful Central Coast? Do you already journal but would love to meet-up with others who nature journal? Do you have children at that age where everything in their world becomes another question to answer? Maybe it's time to explore some answers together.

You're invited to a gathering at the Los Osos Elfin Forest on Sunday, February 25 from 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. to discover a multitude of lifestyle benefits while enjoying the outdoors and nature journaling. If you go, the Elfin Forest is adjacent to the Morro Bay Estuary, so park on 11th or 12th Streets, enter at the trailheads, then find Mary Strum. She will be welcoming prospective members interested in forming a Central Coast Nature Journal Club.

What is nature journaling? If you attended the 2024 Morro Bay Bird Festival, then you might have attended John



Sharon Lovejoy and her husband, Jeff Prostovich, share a journal page during the recent Morro Bay Bird Festival. Photo by Judy Salamacha

Muir Laws keynote presentation. He is the author of The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada, The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling, and How to Teach Nature Journaling co-authored with Emilie Lygren, who also had workshops during the festival particularly for teens. Laws del-

Journaling Together Continued on page 16

## Departing Community Development Director Grateful for Time in Morro Bay

By Neil Farrell



In a staff full of relatively new leaders, Morro Bay's Community Development Director, Scot Graham, was the seasoned veteran.

But now after over 9½ years with the City, Graham is leaving for basically the same job with another city, but one much closer to home.

"Yes," Graham replied to a reporter's attempt at rumor control, "I have accepted a position as the Community Development Director for the City of Pismo Beach." It's a

Grateful Continued on page 17

## For the Love of Woodies

By Neil Farrell



Woody wagons and other antique automobiles hold a special place in the hearts of all classic car lovers and it makes sense that such special vehicles require the skills of a very special kind of craftsman.

On a quiet side street in Downtown Morro Bay, in a historic building, sits David Henderson's Classic Woodworks, the workshop of master craftsman, David Henderson, whose specialty woodworking focuses on restoring, and rebuilding classic Woody wagons, as well as classic wooden boats.

Chances are when you see a Woody wagon at one of the

Woodies Continued on page 18

## Two More Motels in the Works



A computer rendering shows what a new Libertine will look like, with seven motel rooms on the top floor and new restaurant space on the ground floor. Submitted photo



Photos shows the Libertine Brewing Co., building as it sits now. Submitted photo

By Neil Farrell

There are two new motel projects making their way through the City of Morro Bay's planning department, with one now slated for Coastal Commission review and the other heading to the City Council.

The new projects will add to the more than 1,000 motel rooms in town if they are ultimately approved, though both have seen clear sailing so far.

### A New Life for an Old Hut

The latest project to go before the Planning Commission is an effort to turn an old Quonset Hut Navy training barracks into a small hotel and is proposed by a family with deep roots in the local lodging industry.

John and Joan Solu, their son Ethan Solu, and associate, Brian Harvey, are listed as the owners and applicants to redevelop the 1940s-era, former Navy Quonset Hut located at 1141 Main St., into a 10-room hotel using the existing building and its unique half-pipe architecture sitting an oddball shaped piece of land.

"The site is an irregular rectangle of approximately 18,500 square feet," reads the report by Assistant Planner, Susana Toner. "The existing building is a circa 1942 Quonset Hut building that is approximately 4,100 s.f. and was originally intended for military use, possibly for temporary housing. The building was modified in the 1980s by adding

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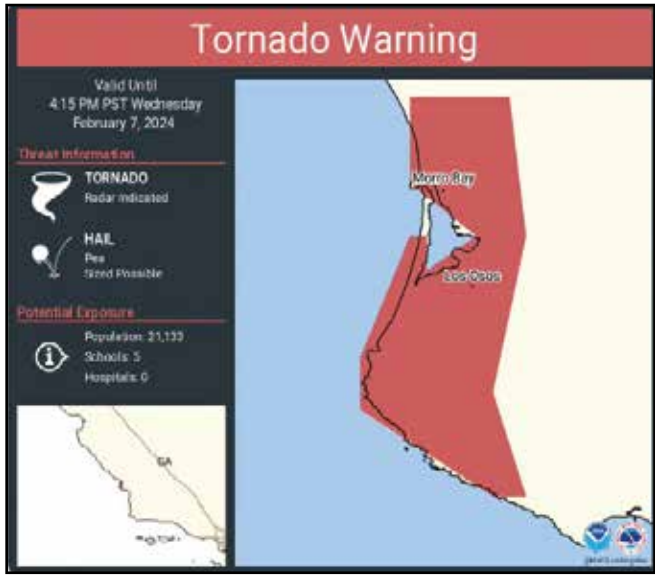
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# Two Tornadoes Blow Through County



This National Weather Service map shows the area that came under a tornado warning Feb. 7.

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Low-end tornadoes touched down in Los Osos and Grover Beach, according to the National Weather Service. Successive storms that pummeled much of the state in early February ended with a tornado warning in parts of the county on February 7. An emergency alert went out via cell phones telling people to be prepared and take cover. The NWS arrived on the Central Coast on Feb. 8 to determine if the damage was caused by straight-line wind or a tornado. What is the difference? In brief all wind flows into a tornado. Debris is often laying at angles due to the curving of the inflow winds. All wind flows out from a downburst. Debris is often laying in straight lines parallel to the outward wind flow, according to NWS.

“The National Weather Service in Los Angeles / Oxnard, CA conducted a damage survey earlier today and is confirming that two EF1 tornadoes occurred in San Luis Obispo County with this activity” the NWS reported. “One tornado was in Grover Beach, and the other tornado occurred affected [sic] the Los Osos area. These are the first tornadoes to occur in San Luis Obispo County since February 2, 2004, and the strongest tornadoes to occur in San Luis Obispo County since before 1950.”

Locally, the weather event that started at about 3:40 p.m. was short with winds and heavy rain that came on fast and were gone without much damage.

South County got the brunt of it. In parts of Grover Beach, trees were ripped out of the ground, debris was flying, asphalt buckled, and power went out when the tornado hit at about 3:57 p.m.

Both tornadoes, rated low-end EF-1 meaning 86 to 110 mph winds, reportedly had peak winds of 95 miles per hour. No deaths or injuries were reported.

### Rating information from NWS report:

#### Los Osos

Rating: EF1  
Estimated Peak Wind: 95 mph  
Path Length /statute/: 5 miles  
Path Width /maximum/: 50 yards  
Fatalities: 0  
Injuries: 0

“A low-topped mini supercell moved onshore in the Los Osos area and produced a weak tornado just east of Los Osos. Damage along its path was intermittent in proximity to Los Osos Valley Road.

The damage consisted of several snapped and downed power poles, with sections of a roof torn off a greenhouse. The tornado dissipated before reaching areas just west of San Luis Obispo.

#### Grover Beach

Rating: EF1  
Estimated Peak Wind: 95 mph

Path Length /statute/: 1 mile  
Path Width /maximum/: 50 yards  
Fatalities: 0  
Injuries: 0

“The tornado produced significant damage to trees and power lines as it tracked through Grover Beach. The tornado uprooted and top-killed numerous trees, some falling onto and damaging vehicles and powerlines. Multiple businesses sustained damage, and the tornadic winds buckled metal garages. The tornado dissipated before entering Arroyo Grande.”

As a reminder, water spouts — essentially tornadoes over water — are not unheard of in local waters, as these big storms, including atmospheric rivers like the recent storm, can topple trees, blow roofs off of buildings and spawn tornadoes.

Readers are advised to be prepared in the event of bad weather, including stocking up on things like bottled drinking water, non-perishable foods, and a “Go bag” of supplies to last for several days.

Extra batteries for flashlights are a good idea, too, and listen to local radio and TV newscasts for storm warnings and advisories.

## You’ve Got Mail



Register to Vote by Feb. 20. Ballots for the March 5 election have mostly been sent.

By Neil Farrell

Check your mailbox, there could be an election ballot inside.

The County Clerk-Recorder’s Elections Office had until Feb. 5 to mail ballots to all registered voters in SLO County, as per the State Elections Code.

But for some voters, who may have changed their party affiliation or re-registered because of a move or voter status, could get two or conceivably even more ballots. And that’s not the only quirk in this election cycle, which will include picking a new senator, as well as presidential candidates for each party.

“Importantly,” reads an announcement from County Clerk Elaina Cano’s office, “anyone who re-registered because of a name or address change — or a change in party affiliation — might find that they end up receiving two ballots. This is because Elections Code also stipulates that voter data be submitted to the ballot printer 60 days before an election, which in this case was Jan. 5.

“Anyone registered at that time was issued a ballot reflecting their registration as of that date. Changes to voter registration since then are reflected in updated voter data that the Clerk-Recorder provides to the ballot printer twice a week between now and February 21. Those updates trigger supplemental ballot mailings.”

If EBN readers do get more than one ballot in the mail, whatever you do, don’t cast them all. “The Clerk-Recorder recommends destroying the first ballot or bringing it in to the Elections Office in SLO or Atascadero.”

Last minute registrants should have gotten a ballot by now but sometimes things happen. “In addition to the impact of recent registration updates,” the notice said, “weather and the general process of mail delivery throughout the county mean that ballots won’t hit everyone’s mailbox on exactly the same day.”

If you haven’t yet registered to vote you need to do so before Feb. 20 to receive a mail-in ballot. Otherwise, it must be done in person at one of the two County Elections Offices or at the polls on Election Day, the department

said.

The SLO Elections Office is in the Katcho Achadjian Government Center at 1055 Monterey St., and is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Mondays-Fridays.

The Atascadero Elections Office is open through Election Day, Tuesday, March 5, and is located at 6565 Capistrano Ave., on the second floor of the County Library. It is open 8:30-4 Mondays-Fridays. Both offices will be open until 8 p.m. on Election Day, and the SLO office will be open for early voting on Saturday, March 2, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

On the ballot will be the candidates vying for the nomination of the major political parties for President, along with a slew of State Assembly, State Senate and Congress, including two seats in the Senate, one a full term and the other a partial term.

The full term is the seat vacated when long-time Sen. Diane Feinstein died in office last September. Gov. Gavin Newsom replaced her with Laphonza Butler, a Democratic organizer, who has since chosen not to seek the seat at the ballot box.

Under Election Laws, anyone the Governor appoints — whether it’s U.S. Senate, Congress, State Houses or County Supervisor — can be sworn in and serve but must win the seat outright at the next available election.

With Feinstein dying last September (and after she had said she was seeking re-election in 2024), and with Butler’s appointment, the race for the “partial term” Senate seat is likely to have a mighty short tenure. The March race will select the Top-2 for a November runoff. The winner of that race will serve out Feinstein’s current term, for just a few weeks, before the winner of the full term is sworn in, in early January 2025.

The full term race on March 5 is also an Open Primary and the Top-2 vote getters will have a run off in November.

This potential political musical chairs will not happen if the same person wins both races.

Ironically, that’s exactly how the Senior Senator from California, Alex Padilla, made his way to Washington.

## Clarification

Last issue’s story about the Diablo Canyon Power Plant receiving a \$1 billion federal grant to remain open, gave the impression that this money was in addition to a \$1.4 billion loan made to PG&E by the State. In fact the State loan was conditioned on the federal grant being approved, and not in addition to, or an accumulation of both.

## Estero Bay News Staff



Dean Sullivan

Owner - Publisher

dean@esterobaynews.com

Theresa-Marie Wilson

Editor

editor@esterobaynews.com

Neil Farrell

Reporter

neil@esterobaynews.com

Shari Sullivan

Marketing Director

shari@esterobaynews.com

Joan Sullivan

Judy Salamacha

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reach us through emails listed above, by phone at

805.528.6011 or by snail mail at: P.O. Box 6192,

Los Osos, CA 93412.



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# News

He ran in two Senate races back in 2020, filling the seat vacated by the now Vice President, Kamala Harris. Because of being sworn in in January 2021, Padilla faced this same dual election in November 2022 taking the remaining Harris term of just a few months and the full term for the seat that she left to run for Vice President.

Among those running for both Senate terms is Congressman Adam Schiff of Hollywood (Dist. 30). Schiff's Congressional District race has been flooded with candidates to replace him, including Miss Universe Iraq 2017, Sarah Idan.

Also missing from the March 5 ballot for most EBN readers is a chance to vote for County Supervisor for the second straight election cycle, after Morro Bay and Los Osos were split from Dist. 2 and placed into Dist. 3 and 5 following the 2021 redistricting by the Board. The change took away the chance to vote for Incumbent Bruce Gibson when he ran for re-election in 2022.

However, that map was then overturned in 2023 by a flipped Board majority, moving the two towns back into Dist. 2, and taking away their scheduled 2024 vote in Dist. 3 and 5 respectively.

The next chance EBN readers will have to vote for a county representative is in 2026 (unless the district map gets changed again).

If readers have questions about their ballots or haven't received one in the mail, call the Elections Office at: (805) 781-5228 or email to: elections@co.slo.ca.us.

Also, there's a FAQ document posted by the County that answers many questions, see: [slovote.com/March2024](http://slovote.com/March2024).

## City Losing Key People

By Neil Farrell

The City of Morro Bay is losing some key people, including the senior member of the management team, a senior planner, and a civil engineer.

Senior Planner Nancy Hubbard retired in December, Community Development Director Scot Graham told Estero Bay News. He added that they were already close to filling her spot to bolster the staffing of Planning Manager Cindy Jacinth.

Graham said they'd hired Kim Fowler, to replace Hubbard in the 4-person staff. She was expected to start work this week, according to Graham.



Retired San Luis Obispo Community Development Director, Michael Codron was expected to be hired as the City of Morro Bay's interim Community Development Director, after the resignation of long time Director, Scot Graham. His contract was to be voted on at the Feb. 13 City Council meeting. Submitted photo

City Engineer, Eric Riddiough, is also leaving Morro Bay. Riddiough told EBN that he was going over to Caltrans Dist. 5 in San Luis Obispo as a "Senior Transportation Engineer," where he will be working on a major highway safety project.

"I will be working on the big 'Y' project at Highway 46/41, east of Paso," Riddiough said, "and other projects on Highways 1, 41, 46, and 101 in the district."

That Hwy 46/41 "Y" intersection is one of the most dangerous little spans of roadway in the state, and helped Hwy 46 earn the ominous nickname — Blood Alley — for the fatal car accidents that have happened there over the years.

Riddiough has been with the City for some 2 years and was working in the private sector before getting the City job.

Public Works Director, Greg Kwolek will hire Riddiough's replacement, as the Engineering Department is under his supervision.

And Community Development Director Graham is also leaving Morro Bay and heading back from whence he came.

"I have accepted a position as the Community Development Director for the City of Pismo Beach," Graham told EBN. "It's a similar position to what I am doing here; a little more money; and less than half the commute. I live in Santa Maria."

Graham has been making that commute since he came to Morro Bay — from Pismo Beach — over 9-1/2-years ago. And with the price of gasoline today, an hour-long commute each way adds up quickly. Pismo is less than half as far from Santa Maria as Morro Bay. His last day with the City is officially, Feb. 19 but Graham said he'd be leaving Feb. 15 to eat up some vacation time before he goes.

City Manager, Yvonne Kimball is expected to handle the search for Graham's replacement, as she is in charge of hiring and firing department heads. Kimball said she was sad to see Graham go.

"While we are sad to see Scot depart from our team," Kimball said, "we extend our heartfelt congratulations on his new role. Scot was one of the most hardworking directors I have worked with. His dedication to the Morro Bay community is phenomenal. My team and I will miss him. We wish him all the best in his future endeavors."

Graham said leaving Morro Bay wasn't an easy decision

to make, shorter commute aside. "Leaving Morro Bay was not an easy decision," he said, "and while I look forward to the opportunities and challenges that lie in front of me, I will also miss the great relationships I developed with the citizens of Morro Bay, the business owners, City staff, councilmembers, and planning commissioners."

He added, "I have nothing but gratitude for the experience and opportunities the City of Morro Bay afforded me."

Kimball isn't wasting any time finding someone to fill in for Graham.

"We are finalizing the agreement with the prospective Interim CD Director this week," she told EBN on Feb. 7. "The employment agreement is scheduled to be considered and approved at the Feb. 13 council meeting. The Interim CD is expected to start on Feb. 20."

## High Winds Cause Some Minor Damage

Story and Photos by Neil Farrell

Strong winds, with gusts of 65-plus mph that struck all day Sunday, Feb. 4 didn't cause too much damage in Morro Bay, but enough happened to lead the City to close a couple of popular recreation facilities.

In the Harbor winds can wreak havoc with moored boats out in the bay, but the winds only caused one boat to break loose off the Yacht Club's moorings, according to the Harbor Patrol. They were able to snag the boat before it was blown into anything.

They also had a few skiffs capsize and sink that were tied up at public docks along the waterfront, but they were able to refloat them.

Up the hill in town, the Public Works Department dealt with damage in local parks.

The "atmospheric river" storm that blew in from the south, toppled a mature cypress tree and smashed a portion of the fence at the Giannini Family Dog Park, located inside Del Mar Park in North Morro Bay. The dog park, which has numerous similarly mature trees scattered throughout the two sides of the dog park, was closed to the public. A work crew was out last Wednesday to remove the tree and then

High Winds Continued on page 4



## New Listings

Three bedroom, two bath home in a great neighborhood near Del Mar Park. **\$760,000**



Morro Bay



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# News

High Winds From page 3



The tennis courts at Monte Young Park are posted closed indefinitely, after strong winds blew off part of the perimeter fencing. The City said it should reopen by April 20.



Photo shows the damaged fence around the tennis courts at Monte Young Park.



A tree crew worker cuts limbs off a cypress tree that fell and destroyed some of the fencing at the Giannini Family Dog Park. The City said the dog park would be reopened by Feb. 24.

fix the downed perimeter fencing.

And the wind destroyed a portion of the fence around the tennis courts at Monte Young Park on the other end of town in the Morro Heights Neighborhood.

“Due to the high winds associated with the storm that hit Morro Bay on Sunday, Feb. 4,” reads a news release from the City Public Works Department, “the dog park at

Del Mar Park and the tennis courts at Monte Young Park will be closed temporarily.”

Maintenance crews were to work on repairs and making sure the areas are safe for the public to use again before they are reopened.

“The dog park is expected to open by Saturday, Feb. 24th, and the tennis courts by Saturday, April 20,” the City said.

The Fire Department was busy. In a report compiled for the Estero Bay News, by the department’s Administrative Technician, Tracy McConnell, on Feb. 4, the fire department got a total of 24 emergency calls about downed trees and wires. It was busy all that day.

Sunday, February 4th we had a total of 24 calls of downed lines and trees.

“The calls were pretty consistent,” she said, “at three to four calls an hour from about 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.”

The department had all hands on deck. “We had a crew of five plus the Division Chief on duty that day, with two engines and two utility vehicles rushing about town all day.”

## Trees Come Down



Photos by Neil Farrell

Work recently began in earnest on a small subdivision at the north end of The Cloisters, on a property that was once intended for a new City firehouse.

The 0.99-acre parcel was subdivided into five lots ringed a cul-de-sac off Coral Avenue at San Jacinto. That site was part of the original Cloisters Project and was deeded over to the City with the intentions of being the site of a North Morro Bay firehouse.

But circumstances changed over time and the City’s main Harbor Street firehouse was damaged in the 2003 San Simeon Earthquake and eventually condemned.

The City chose to rebuild a new station on the old Downtown site and plans for a second new station at the Cloisters property were abandoned.

The property was on the market for many years with

no takers and eventually, the City processed a 6-lot subdivision that was initially rejected by the Coastal Commission on a technicality. But eventually a 5-lot subdivision was approved by the Commission and aided in the City’s eventually selling the property. Money from the proceeds was to be used to pay down the debt on the new Harbor Street Firehouse.

The photos show a tree crew taking down the last of a row of towering eucalyptus trees from the property. The tree removals opened up a view of Morro Rock from Hwy 1 that hasn’t been seen in many decades.

## Openings on Diablo Decommissioning Panel

Despite ongoing efforts to keep Diablo Canyon Power Plant up and running for years to come, Pacific Gas & Electric continues with its efforts eyeing the plant’s eventual closure; even though that might not happen for another 5-20 years.

“While PG&E is pursuing the steps to continue operating Diablo Canyon Power Plant until 2030, as directed by the State,” reads a news release by the company, “PG&E will continue to provide opportunities for community input regarding future decommissioning plans and potential future uses of the Diablo Canyon site.”

PG&E formed a “Decommissioning Engagement Panel” in 2018, after its announcement that it would close both nuclear reactors this year and next, when their operating licenses were slated to expire.

The panel was formed to hold public hearings and gather input as to what should ultimately be done with the fantastic 12,000-acre coastal property?

The company is accepting applications now through March 5 to sit on this year’s panel and continue the decommissioning planning, which the company describes as a “local, non-regulatory stakeholder group.” Decommissioning is also estimated to cost upwards of \$7 billion.

“There are several positions subject for appointment or reappointment consistent with the Panel’s Charter,” PG&E said.

Information on how to apply is posted online at: [pge.com/diablo/canyon](http://pge.com/diablo/canyon) (scroll to the Engagement Panel section) or see: [diablo/canyonpanel.org](http://diablo/canyonpanel.org).

The applicants will be chosen by current panel members representing PG&E and the California Public Utilities Commission, who are not seeking reappointment, the company said.

They will “select candidates who broadly reflect the diverse stakeholder viewpoints in proximity to Diablo Canyon Power Plant.”

Under the eligibility requirements, as laid out by the Panel’s Charter, “elected officials, current PG&E employees and their immediate family members will not be considered

# Morro Bay

## ANNUAL

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# News

eligible for community membership on the Panel.”

The Panel presides over periodic public meetings in an information-gathering setting, as well as taking public comments on what should become of the property, once the power plant use is finally ended?

## Power Plant Master Plan Release Feb. 20



This photo shows a side view of the Morro Bay Power Plant taken from the northern edge of the property, and looking over the top of the site where plant owner, Vistra, hopes to build a battery energy storage facility. The City plans to unveil its Power Plant Master Plan at the Planning Commission's Feb. 20 meeting and the draft EIR for the battery project is expected to be released sometime in the next few weeks. Photo by Neil Farrell

By Neil Farrell

Work on writing a master plan for the old Morro Bay Power Plant property will be front and center when the Morro Bay Planning Commission meets on Tuesday, Feb. 20.

City Community Development Director, Scot Graham, said the City's consultant, Rincon, will unveil a draft of the power plant master plan (PPMP) and take public comments before moving to a final master plan which could be expected to be released in a few months for final approvals.

The final plan will first go to the Planning Commission as well as other advisory boards with an interest in the matter, for their official input and comments, which will then be included in a final, final document that the City Council will vote, after making whatever changes they reach agreement on, for a final local vote.

We say "local" vote because the plan will also have to be approved by the Coastal Commission, as it will ultimately be included in the City's various planning documents — general plan, zoning ordinance, waterfront master plan, etc.

Graham said the final staff report for the Feb. 20 meeting would be released to the public with the commission's normal agenda, likely on Thursday, Feb. 15, which is after Estero Bay News' deadline.

The draft master plan has been a couple of years in the making and will include most of the over 100-acre site, with the exception of plant owner Vistra's proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project, which is being sited on a 22-acre plot at the plant property that used to be the site of a fuel oil tank farm.

And the BESS project is also nearing a milestone, as Graham said the Environmental Impact Report on the

600-megawatt BESS project is expected to be released for comments "in the next few weeks."

That project is headed for a showdown at the ballot box in November, when voters will get a chance to throw up a roadblock of sorts, in the form of Measure A-24, a citizen's initiative that would lock in the existing zoning on the power plant property, which in the current General Plan is zoned commercial-visitor serving.

Vistra's BESS Project would also have to seek a zoning change as part of the permitting for its project. However, Vistra may have a work-around the City and its voters

## 20th Anniversary of Chinese New Year Celebration L.O.

A packed crowd filled the parking lot in front of Volumes of Pleasure Bookshoppe to celebrate the Year of the Wood Dragon as part of the Chinese New Year.

The tradition started 20 years ago by Carroll Leslie and Barbara Strauss, owners of the bookstore, after witnessing a Chinese New Year event in San Francisco. They originally intended to do just one cycle of the 12 Chinese Zodiac Signs but it has become a favorite tradition that everyone looks forward to.

Each year the Cal Poly Lion Dancers entertain with traditional dances and to bless the community.

"Our gratitude to our community for your continuous support! Thank you to our neighbors for letting us take over the parking lot for a few hours," Carroll said. "Thank you to Carlock's Bakery for making delicious bao, almond cookies and treats. Thank you all for coming out to share this gorgeous day with us. We are so fortunate to have the Cal Poly Lion Dance Team to help us celebrate."

Photos by Dean Sullivan



through the State Legislature and the June 2023 passage of Assembly Bill 205.

AB 205 expanded the California Energy Commission authority to assume permitting under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of green energy projects like the BESS and other storage facilities in the state.

The CEC could take over if the applicant can't get passed the local authority (city or county). Some have called AB 205 "Life After Death," in that a project totally rejected by a local permitting agency, can apply to the CEC to take it over, and presumably have a second chance at approval.



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# News

## Wrong-Way Driver Guilty of Murder — Faces Life in Prison

A wrong-way driver, who in 2021 crashed head-on into a car on Hwy 101 in Nipomo, has been convicted on all counts, including second-degree murder, the District Attorney's Office announced.

On Feb. 1, a SLO Superior Court jury convicted, Earnesto Nava Herrera, 27, on five charges in the fatal drunk-driving crash that killed a 14-year-old girl and seriously injured two others.

Herrera was convicted of second degree murder, gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, hit and run causing death, driving while under the influence of alcohol causing great bodily injury, and driving on a suspended license, the D.A.'s news release said.

The convictions leave Herrera facing a possible life in prison sentence, which will be handed down on March 5 by Superior Court Judge Michael S. Frye.

The tale is a sad example of avoidable tragedy and the inherent danger of driving drunk.

"During the nearly 3-week trial," the release said, "jurors heard evidence that on the evening of March 27, 2021, Herrera, while driving heavily intoxicated, collided with 70-feet of metal pipe fencing and knocked over a tree."

Hitting a tree didn't slow him down much. "He fled in his vehicle and entered Highway 101 using the Tefft Street off-ramp," the release said. Turning into an highway off ramp is a common error that impaired drivers make, which results in them driving the wrong way of the highway, despite there being guard rails down the median to prevent vehicles from crossing over into oncoming traffic.

"While driving the wrong direction on the off-ramp, Herrera nearly collided with a vehicle that was exiting the freeway. The vehicle was able to swerve to avoid a head-on collision."

Hitting a tree and a near-miss crash, didn't even slow him down. "Herrera continued to accelerate northbound on 101 against traffic when he crashed into the victim vehicle head on. The collision killed a 14-year old and seriously injured two others in the victim vehicle."

With his car totaled, Herrera fled the scene on foot. "Herrera fled on foot as his vehicle was disabled," the release said. "About an hour after the deadly crash, California Highway Patrol located Herrera, by using a helicopter



Earnesto Herrera, 27, has been convicted of a slew of charges including second-degree murder in the 2021 fatal crash that killed a 14-year-old girl in Nipomo. Submitted photo

with Forward Facing Infrared [FLIR] technology. He was crawling near the freeway in an apparent attempt to avoid detection."

Officers arrested him and he failed a sobriety test. "Herrera had a blood alcohol level of .164," the release said, "nearly 2-½ hours after the deadly crash." The legal limit to drive is .08% blood alcohol (BAL).

It was his second drunk driving arrest in just a few months and he'd apparently been warned of the consequences if he continued his reckless ways.

"On Dec. 31, 2020, just 3-months before the fatal collision," the D.A. said, "Herrera was arrested for DUI and was read the following admonition: 'Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or both, impairs your ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. Therefore, it is extremely dangerous to human life to drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or both. If you continue to drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or both, and as a result of that driving, someone is killed, you can be charged with murder.'"

The acting district attorney said it didn't have to be like this. "This is a terrible, yet completely avoidable tragedy," said Assistant D.A. Eric Dobroth, who is overseeing the department while D.A. Dan Dow is deployed overseas. "As this incident so heartbreakingly illustrates, driving while impaired puts every life on the roadway in peril. We are committed to the aggressive prosecution of those driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs in our community and will charge murder when appropriate."

The D.A. has a message for everyone. "Please report suspected impaired drivers by calling 9-1-1. If you find yourself in a position where you have been drinking or have ingested drugs [legal or otherwise] and suspect that you may be impaired, please do not drive; call a friend or a ride service, or simply stay put until you sober up. If you see someone who is about to drive while impaired, please act. Let's all be part of the solution."

The case was investigated by the CHP, with the assistance of the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigation and was prosecuted by Deputy D.A. Melissa Chabra.

## New Contract for County Jail Medical Services



County Supervisors recently approved a 5-year new contract worth \$10.5 million a year, for medical services at its three main jails — the Men's and Women's Jails and the Honor Farm. Photo Courtesy SLO County

By Neil Farrell

County Supervisors in January approved a new contract for medical services at the County Jail system, extending an existing contract with a contracted firm.

County Sheriff, Ian Parkinson, asked for approval of the contract for a 5-year period with California Forensic Medical Group or Wellpath, "to continue providing comprehensive health care services to incarcerated persons in custody at the County of San Luis Obispo Jail," reads the Sheriff's report to Supervisors.

Wellpath's contract comes after the County went out for bids last August, according to Sheriff Parkinson. The contract, which runs from Feb. 1, 2024 to Jan. 31, 2027, is for over \$10.5 million a year, according to the report. The

County Jail Continued on page 9

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Kickers	Harmony Cellars	Tiger Monkey Tattoo

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## Estero Bay News Briefs

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

### The 2024 Primary Election is underway

Vote-by-Mail ballots have been distributed and citizens can make their voice count by depositing them for free at the following library locations by March 5:

**North County** - Atascadero; Santa Margarita; Shandon libraries  
**South County**- Arroyo Grande; Nipomo; Oceano libraries

**North Coast** - Cambria; Cayucos; Los Osos; Morro Bay libraries

More election information can be found at [slocounty.ca.gov](http://slocounty.ca.gov) under Departments then Clerk Recorder.

### Calling All Garden Lovers



Mark your calendars because the Morro Bay Garden Tour is back. The tour is scheduled for Sunday, April 28 from 12-5 p.m. There are four gardens featured, however the tour is self-guided and can be enjoyed at the pleasure of your own pace.

Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at Volumes of Pleasure in Los Osos, Coalesce Bookstore in Morro Bay, Farm Supply (locations include SLO, AG and Paso Robles), My805Tix.com and with any AAUW member.

This is the major fundraiser for the Morro Bay Branch of the American Association of University Women. Proceeds are used to fund community projects and scholarships.

The American Association of University Women advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research. Founded in 1957 and chartered

in 1959, the Morro Bay Branch has since grown to over 80 members representing Cambria, Cayucos, Los Osos, Morro Bay and San Luis Obispo.

For more information, email [mbaaauw1959@gmail.com](mailto:mbaaauw1959@gmail.com).

### Downtown SLO Announces New CEO

Downtown SLO announced that LeBren Harris, who has served as the chairperson of the board of directors for the SLO Chamber of Commerce, as well as area director of sales for Quorum Hotels & Resorts, has been hired as the new CEO.

"I am absolutely thrilled and deeply honored to step into the role of CEO. The prospect of leading and inspiring a team united in our commitment to serve and uplift our community fills me with boundless excitement," says Harris.

Her journey began as a student-athlete at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, where she excelled in track and field, earning a coveted scholarship. LeBren's prowess in the 400m hurdles led to her becoming a two-time Big West Champion and securing the title of the current school record holder in the same event. In 2004, LeBren earned her bachelor's degree in kinesiology from Cal Poly, and continued at Cleveland State University, where she obtained a master's degree in sport management in 2006.

Beyond her professional achievements, LeBren said she finds fulfillment in her role as a wife to San Luis Obispo native Terrance Harris for over 15 years. Together, they share the joy of raising three beautiful daughters - Jolee (11), Mikayla (11), and Alicia (6). As CEO of Downtown SLO, LeBren will continue to advocate for downtown vitality and oversee the organization's highly visible events, including the weekly Thursday Night Farmers' Market, Concerts in the Plaza, the Annual Holiday Parade, and more.

"We are thrilled to have LeBren join Downtown SLO to lead our amazing team," says Donna Lewis, Downtown SLO Board President. "We are looking forward to her fresh perspective and the enthusiasm she brings to all she does in our community."



LeBren Harris

### SLO Recognized as 'Prohousing'

The City of San Luis Obispo was recognized by the State of California as a prohousing community, which means San Luis Obispo now has a competitive advantage for more funding incentives and additional resources to speed up the development of housing for people with all income levels. This brings the total number of Prohousing communities to 37 in California.

"The people of San Luis Obispo have made it clear: We need more housing options here," said Mayor Erica A. Stewart. "While the City government doesn't build housing directly, the City has adopted - and continues to adopt - innovative policies that will create new housing developments and further the construction of more housing in San Luis Obispo."

California needs to plan for 2.5 million new homes over the next eight years, with at least 1 million serving the needs of lower-income Californians, according to the Statewide Housing Plan. Reaching that goal is only possible with the concerted efforts of state and local governments actively working to implement state housing laws and best practices that go above and beyond. San Luis Obispo needs to accommodate up to 3,354 new homes between 2020 and 2028.

The State's Prohousing Designation Program is part of a package of supports, incentives, and accountability measures established by the 2019-20 Budget Act. By earning the Prohousing Designation, communities receive exclusive access to Prohousing grants and additional points in the scoring of competitive housing, community development, and infrastructure funding programs administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD).

Send your news, community and business briefs to [Editor@EsteroBayNews.com](mailto:Editor@EsteroBayNews.com). Be sure to include the who, what, why, where and when information along with a contact person.

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## JOIN THE DIABLO CANYON DECOMMISSIONING ENGAGEMENT PANEL.

While PG&E is pursuing the steps to continue operating Diablo Canyon Power Plant until 2030 as directed by the state, PG&E will continue to provide opportunities for community input regarding future decommissioning plans and potential future uses of the Diablo Canyon site.

PG&E is currently in regulatory proceedings for both extended operations and decommissioning.

The Diablo Canyon Decommissioning Engagement Panel (Panel) was created to foster open and frequent dialogue between members of the local community and PG&E on topics regarding the site's eventual decommissioning, originally planned to begin in 2025 but now slated to begin in 2030 or later. The panel will focus on decommissioning related issues not ongoing continued operations. The Panel will focus on decommissioning related issues and not ongoing continued operations.

There are currently open positions on the Engagement Panel subject for appointment or reappointment consistent with the Panel's Charter. The application period runs until March 5, 2024.

Visit [pge.com/diablocanyon](http://pge.com/diablocanyon) and scroll down to the Engagement Panel section or [diablocanyonpanel.org](http://diablocanyonpanel.org) to apply.



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# Police Blotter



- **Feb. 2:** Two found cell phones were turned in at the police station. No word on where they were found or who's now needing a pay phone.
- **Feb. 2:** Police responded at 10:44 a.m. to Coast Electronics in the 500 block of Quintana where some apparently evil nerd shoplifted.
- **Feb. 1:** Police responded to Avalon and Greenwood for a grand theft, and will no doubt have a jolly good time investigating.
- **Feb. 1:** Police spied a familiar woman, 42, at 7:30 a.m. in the 900 block of Piney Way. She had three bench warrants, but was only cited and released, apparently not worth the gas to drive to jail.
- **Jan. 31:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 9:34 p.m. at Radcliff and Main. Logs indicated the 42-year-old woman driver was nicked for suspicion of possessing illegal drugs, and driving on a toot and booked into County Jail to sleep it off.
- **Jan. 31:** Police responded to another minor car crash at 11:47 a.m. at Main and Radcliff.
- **Jan. 30:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 2:30 p.m. in the 500 block of Kings. The 45-year-old apparent tool was nicked for a bench warrant.
- **Jan. 30:** Police contacted another familiar foe at 3:20 p.m. in the 200 block of Surf, who had two non-citable bench warrants. She was hauled off to meet her fate.
- **Jan. 28:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 9:49 p.m. in the 1300 block of Main. The 41-year-old dingus was on probation and so got searched and of course police alleged-

ly found suspected narcotics on him, leading to a free one-way trip to the gaol.

- **Jan. 28:** Someone turned in a laptop they reportedly found. No word on how it got deleted in the first place.
- **Jan. 28:** Police responded to the 200 block of Atascadero Rd., for a reported vandalism. Logs indicated a 61-year-old fellow was caught on video vandalizing an innocent mailbox — busting off the mailbox' door and stealing it; proving once again that some boneheads will steal anything.
- **Jan. 26:** Police responded to the corner of Marina and Monterey where someone left a bunch of apparent junk — carts, a bike and miscellaneous stuff — on the ground blocking the sidewalk, a death penalty case in some places.
- **Jan. 25:** Police responded at 10:38 p.m. to South Bay Blvd., and Quintana for a traffic crash. Earlier at 9:12 a.m. they had another accident at Hwy 1 and Yerba Buena. No arrests were made in either apparent fender-bender.
- **Jan. 25:** Police contacted a repeat customer at 8:30 a.m. in the 200 block of Harbor. The 39-year-old fellow was nicked for suspicion of possessing drug paraphernalia, as his stash had apparently already gone up in smoke.
- **Jan. 24:** At 10:07 p.m. police came across a juvenile hooligan in the 400 block of Yerba Buena. Logs indicated the apparent street yob was allegedly drunk and got in a tussle with the cops. The miscreant was arrested for suspicion of battery on a police officer; being a minor beyond parental control; and drunk and disorderly conduct, which explains a lot. He was hauled to juvenile hall to cool his heels.
- **Jan. 24:** Police responded at 7:38 p.m. to the 200 block of Beach for a minor traffic crash.
- **Jan. 24:** They used to say California's streets were paved in gold, one fellow almost had that come true. A man turned in to police \$300 cash that he said he found laying on the ground by his parked car on Napa Avenue (we won't say where). If it isn't claimed within 30 days, it becomes a case of finder's-keepers.
- **Jan. 24:** Porch pirates struck in the 600 block of Quintana, on the other hand, someone turned over mail they'd mistakenly gotten in the 500 block of Quinn Ct.
- **Jan. 24:** Police contacted another wanted chap at 2:32 p.m. in the 1600 block of Main. The 33-year-old malcontent was hauled first to the hospital for a medical check, and then to jail on a bench warrant.
- **Jan. 23:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:38 p.m. at Main and Dunes. The 53-year-old driver was nicked for suspicion of being thick as a tick behind the stick.
- **Jan. 23:** Police responded at 7 p.m. to a disturbance in the 800 block of Monterey. Logs indicated a suspected inebriated squit, 66, reportedly got into a fight with the cops that landed him in the dungeon.
- **Jan. 23:** Police responded at 2:41 pm. to Market and Beach for a car crash. No word on injuries, but the cars will never be the same.
- **Jan. 23:** Police contacted another repeat customer at 1 p.m. in City Park on Harbor. He of course had a bench warrant and was issued another disappearance ticket and let loose to catch another day.
- **Jan. 23:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow at 10:39 a.m. at the Community Center on Kennedy Way. Logs indicated the swizzle stick, 34, was nicked for suspicion of being trashed and stoned in public; possessing a glass crack pipe; and disorderly conduct. He was put out of our misery for now.
- **Jan. 21:** Someone in the 600 block of Main reported a missing person and police filed the information.
- **Jan. 21:** Police contacted a suspicious fellow, 46, at 12:50 p.m. actin' a-fool-again in the 1200 block of Embarcadero. He had a warrant and was hauled to the hoosegow for a delousing.
- **Jan. 20:** Police responded to the high school on Atascadero Road at 11:22 a.m. for a reported battery. Logs indicated an unknown ruffian man "pushed a juvenile volunteer at a high school event." The boor apparently fled before police arrived to teach him some manners.

- **Jan. 20:** Someone turned in a bicycle they found in the 900 block of Morro Bay Blvd. No word on whether it was stolen or even worth stealing.
- **Jan. 18:** Police came across a suspicious woman, 61, at 6:30 p.m. in the 900 block of Morro Bay Blvd. who had a "non-citable" — an invitation she couldn't refuse — from the judge. She was carted to the hospital for a medical check and then off to the Tower she went.
- **Jan. 18:** Police were called to a reported theft at 2:35 p.m. in the 400 block of LaJolla. Logs indicated they caught up to the mutt on Dogwood and nailed the 20-year-old alleged petty thief for petty theft.
- **Jan. 18:** Police responded to a disturbance at 10:30 a.m. in the 2600 block of Elm and filed a report charging battery.
- **Jan. 17:** At 10 p.m. police contacted a suspicious man in City Park on Harbor. The apparent Scrap, 55, had a bench warrant and was checked into the County B&B.
- **Jan. 17:** Police responded to the 400 block of Monterey where some anarchist vandalized an innocent car.
- **Jan. 16:** Police responded to the 1100 block of Main where they took a report involving the suspected forcible rape of a co-habitant or spouse by threats or fear; and making terrorist threats. An arrest is hoped to be imminent.
- **Jan. 17:** At 2 p.m. police contacted two more model citizens with three bench warrants in City Park on Harbor. A 41-year-old man and 23-year-old woman chilled in the cooler.
- **Jan. 17:** Police responded at 7 a.m. to a traffic crash at Main and San Jacinto. No injuries to report.
- **Jan. 17:** Police contacted a regular customer at 5:55 a.m. in the 800 block of Quintana. The 43-year-old apparent night owl was nicked for suspicion of possessing illegal drugs and paraphernalia, hanging offenses in some parts.
- **Jan. 17:** Police in the 300 block of Morro Bay Blvd., espied a pair of likely suspects at 12:30 a.m. Logs indicated the fellows, ages 66 and 49, were arrested for suspicion of possessing drugs and paraphernalia and carted off to the County sober living facility.
- **Jan. 16:** Police contacted another apparent deplorable outside the basket in the 300 block of Atascadero Rd., at 5:20 p.m. The 58-year-old fellow had two non-citable bench warrants and was hauled away.
- **Jan. 16:** Police responded to the fire department on Harbor at 12:15 p.m. after they found an apparently abandoned and possibly — no, probably — stolen, electric bicycle outside the stationhouse. In an unrelated matter, at 10:40 a.m. a woman in the 2000 block of Main reported finding a strange bicycle abandoned in her backyard.
- **Jan. 16:** Police responded at 11:21 a.m. to the Mobil gas station in the 900 block of Morro Bay Blvd., after they reported some evil, apparent nature lover, ripped up multiple plants and tore up the flower arrangements in the planters by the pumps. The apparently angry fellow reportedly admitted to taking the flowers and police graciously allowed him to return the plants, which he reportedly did, and thus avoided being planted in jail.



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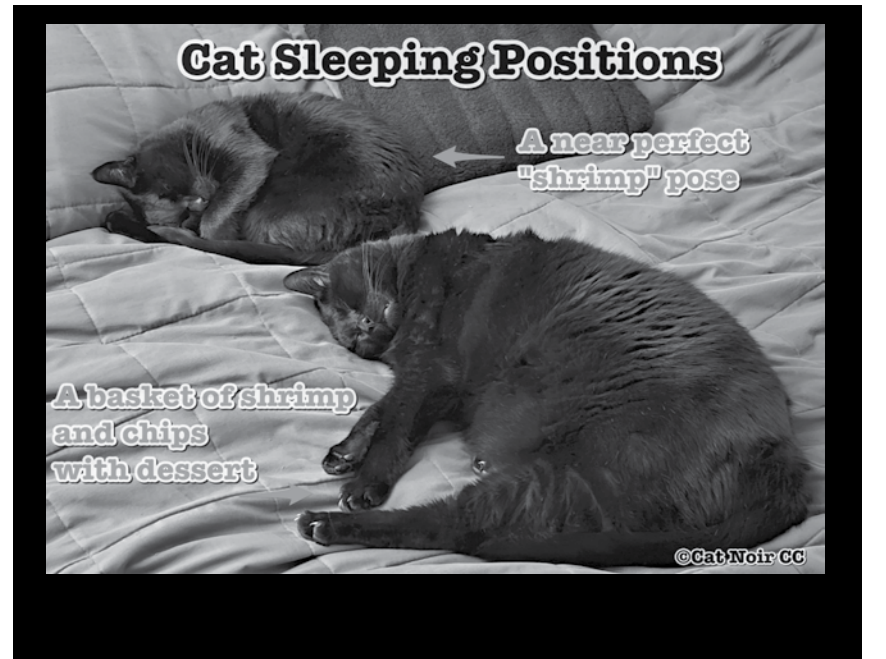
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# News

County Jail From page 6

contract length is 3 years, plus two additional 1-year extensions, or 5-years total. The contract also has a 3% a year inflation increase built in.

“The services outlined in the contract,” the Sheriff said, “include medical, behavioral health, and dental care, and are consistent with the national standards of correctional health care as defined by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care [NCCHC]. The contract also includes services for the Jail Based Competency Treatment [JBCT] Program, which is reimbursable by the Department of State Hospitals and is a net neutral cost to the County.”

Outsourcing medical services to inmates started back in 2018, after some high-profile deaths at the Men’s Jail, some of which were due to health problems, as well as citizen concerns and a critical Grand Jury report. So with the public, and especially voters clamoring for better health and mental health care for the incarcerated, the County turned to Wellpath starting in February 2019; and it’s a path that’s worked well.

“Under the current Wellpath site leadership,” Sheriff Parkinson said, “the Jail received NCCHC accreditation in October 2022 and continues to remain in compliance with NCCHC standards.”

That first 3-year contract (with two extra years), was amended six times by the County, Sheriff Parkinson said, adding the JBCT Program, and to increase the amount due to high inflation (from 3.6% in 2020 to 4.8% in 2023). Last April the sixth amendment increased the staffing levels.

It’s a big job and growing because of demand, governmental requirements and changing industry standards.

“The increasing physical and mental health needs of the incarcerated population,” the Sheriff said, “along with ongoing and new mandates, which require increased services in the Jail, have led to increased costs and the need for additional staffing. In order to continue to meet the County’s obligations to provide comprehensive health care services to individuals in custody, the staffing matrix in the new contract has been increased to 40.8 FTE [full

time equivalent], which is an increase of 7.0 FTE from the current contract.”

The new hires will include: a Nursing Supervisor, Substance Abuse Counselor, Discharge Planner, Certified Medical Assistant, Licensed Psychiatric Technicians, “and additional monthly hours for the Psychiatrist and Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner/Physician Assistant,” the Sheriff said.

He said the new contract will increase psychiatric care and substance abuse treatment in the jails.

As part of that medical treatment for drug addicts, the Jail is also trying for a grant — along with the Behavioral Health Department — to be able to use injectable treatments to combat opioid addiction, to supplement the treatments available to help those addicted to heroin, methamphetamines and fentanyl.

The JBCT Program is aimed at mentally ill inmates who committed felonies and are “deemed incompetent to stand trial,” the Sheriff said. “Having a JBCT program at the Jail improves care for mentally ill offenders, as they will be offered treatment right away, rather than having to wait for a State Hospital bed to become available, which can often take three months or longer.”

That’s part of the story that happened to Andrew Holland, an Atascadero man who in 2017, while awaiting transfer to the County’s Psychiatric Health Facility, was strapped into a restraint chair at the County Jail and left for nearly 2 days, before he died. The County and Holland’s Family reached a \$5 million settlement in his death, money that was used in part to challenge Sheriff Parkinson and District Attorney Dan Dow in the next election (both won re-election).

The Sheriff’s Department and Wellpath are also working on a new program, the “California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal” or CalAIM, which must be implemented no later than Sept. 30, 2026, according to the Sheriff.

According to the Department of Health Care Services, CalAIM is a long-term commitment to transform Medi-Cal, making the program more equitable, coordinated and person-centered to help people maximize their health and life trajectory.” (See: [www.dhcs.ca.gov/CalAIM](http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/CalAIM) for

information.)

Once the two sides figure out what resources — operational and administrative — the CalAIM Program will need, Sheriff Parkinson said they would likely come back to Supervisors to amend this new Wellpath contract. But there’s a funding source for that too.

“CalAIM efforts in the Jail,” Sheriff Parkinson said, “will be funded through Providing Access and Transforming Health [PATH] Justice-Involved grants.”

## Fire Destroys BMW



Tracey Burger took this photo of the flames engulfing the BMW sedan before the Morro Bay Fire Department arrived on scene.

By Neil Farrell

A spectacular fire destroyed a BMW sedan driving north up Hwy 1 last week. No injuries were reported in the Wednesday, Feb. 7 blaze that was reported at about 8:30 a.m. and located just before the Morro Bay Boulevard exit.

The fire department said that the car was traveling on the northbound side of the divided highway when it caught fire.



Morro Bay Firefighters douse the flames with water, as one of the men uses a rescue saw to vent the Beemer’s hood. Photo courtesy MBFD

It was fully engulfed in flames when they arrived, and in photographs shared with Estero Bay News, a towering plume of thick black smoke rose high into the crisp morning air. Once firefighters hit the blaze with water, the black smoke turned white, signaling the extinguishing of the flames.



Thick white smoke obscures the view of fire engines and emergency personnel who responded to a spectacular car fire on Hwy 1 the morning of Wednesday, Feb. 7. Photo courtesy MBFD

The fire closed one of the northbound lanes for a short time, the fire department said, while they mopped up the mess. No injuries were reported, except of course the car will never be the same.

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# Community

## Kids Spread Sunshine and Peace



The fourth and fifth grade Del Mar Peacekeepers known as Sunshine Spreaders making Peace Pickets

Photos and Story By Ruth Ann Angus

In November I had the great pleasure of meeting with the fourth and fifth grade Del Mar Peacekeepers known as Sunshine Spreaders.

The group of thirteen students at Del Mar Elementary School in Morro Bay came about through the efforts of one student, Kira Johnson, who spearheaded an idea for a club that would make a difference in the world. Kira gathered a few friends together and introduced the idea and before you knew it, a whole new organization was formed. Sunshine Spreaders is totally kid driven and with the help of Susan Stephens, Counseling Aide running the Friend-to-Friend Program, is an aid to their classmates with positive peacebuilding projects.

I heard about the group when Principal Michael Wood contacted my Rotary Club in Morro Bay looking for some help. As Peacebuilder chairperson I was happy to hear about the new student council that had been formed and to find out that the school was interested in doing some peacebuilding projects in the community. I wanted to know what a Sunshine Spreader was and to find out if they would be interested in a fun project making Peace Pickets.

Sunshine Spreaders has a mission statement that says they are "dedicated to instilling a sense of social responsibility and to empower a lifelong commitment to service and support within their school community." They are concerned with teamwork, inclusivity, and the values of empathy. And they intend to "strive to make the world a better place." Stephens has filled an available classroom with all kinds of exciting and innovative things for these students to do and learn, and the group meets often to work on projects.

I had a great talk with the kids as they ate their lunch that day, and we all decided that Peace Pickets was a great project for them to do. These pickets are made of wood and display an 8-inch heart with the peace symbol placed in the middle of the heart. This is then attached to a wooden garden stake about two feet high and can be placed in any garden or yard space.

This project grew out of one an adult peace educa-

tion group did through the organization Yes We Can Peacebuilders (YWCP) in Morro Bay which is a peace education organization I started in 2016. YWCP became a full nonprofit in June of 2022 after merging with the 22-year existing nonprofit People of Faith for Justice in San Luis Obispo.

Our plan for the Sunshine Spreaders was to ask for funds from Rotary to purchase the supplies and then have the students paint and decorate the Peace Pickets readying them for sale as a fundraiser to purchase garden-style Peace Poles. All of this took place in time for sales of the Peace Pickets to take place during the holiday season. Thirty peace pickets were completed and after being placed on display in the foyer of the school administration building, sales were brisk with all but six being sold before Christmas.

Folks may see these colorful Peace Pickets in yards around town in both Morro Bay and Los Osos. They offer a subtle message and that is, that we love peace, desire peace, and will work for peace. The Sunshine Spreaders want to change the world and understand that starting with their community is the best way to accomplish this. They plan to continue to make Peace Pickets and hope to have one in every yard in town. They are grateful to the Rotary Club of Morro Bay for their help with funding this effort.

I plan to continue to work with these great students on Peace Education projects and emphasize how important it is to continue to work for peace in our world.

Readers interested in purchasing a Peace Picket should visit the administration office at Del Mar Elementary School at 501 Sequoia Street, Morro Bay or email Susan Stephens at [sstephens@slcusd.org](mailto:sstephens@slcusd.org) or email me at [yeswecanpeacebuilders1@gmail.com](mailto:yeswecanpeacebuilders1@gmail.com). They are also available at Smooch on the Embarcadero.



Some of the completed Peace Pickets.

### OUT & ABOUT

WITH THE BOOKSHELF WRITERS

The BookShelf Writers consist of four Estero Bay women who have been writing & critiquing together for over five years. For more samples of their work, please visit [www.thebookshelfwriters.com](http://www.thebookshelfwriters.com)

Each issue, this column will feature one of the BookShelf Writers:  
Debbie Black, Catherine "Kiki" Kornreich, Judy Salamacha and Susan Vasquez

## Whale Tales



Story and Illustration by Catherine "Kiki" Kornreich

In Mexico, I once saw a mama and her baby whale frolicking very close to shore. A group gathered to watch, and a kayaker paddled close to them. The mom was clearly unhappy about the kayaker, but the guy didn't seem to care, he kept getting closer. The mom was swimming in tight circles around her baby, frantically slapping the water with her tail, as the kayaker bounced around in the turbulence, taking photos.

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# Community

While it was spectacular to watch, we were all very frightened for both the whales and the crazy kayaker. Our yelling did nothing to dissuade the dude, but he finally realized he needed to paddle in. The bystanders and I proceeded to scold him, in both Spanish and English, and ask why he didn't heed the mom's clear warnings. After a futile effort to defend himself, he slunk off, dragging his kayak. In all my whale sightings combined, I have never seen so many tail whacks.

Me do loves me some whales, and that was the kind of experience I never imagined witnessing.

I also love whale-watching tours and went on my sixth Morro Bay boat tour Saturday. I gotta say, each trip has been quite exhilarating and different.

This was with Sub Sea Tours (there are other tour companies in town), off the Embarcadero, and we saw many Gray Whales cruising on their way south.

The Whale Trail is a whale superhighway that brings the migrating whales from north of Alaska, through Morro Bay and on to Baja. This time of year is perfect for viewing as their journey is usually between December and February (they return north from February through April).

Whales are here most of the year (Humpbacks in the spring and fall), but not in such abundance, so your better chance of seeing them is in the windows of migration.

On Saturday's trip, Captain DJ took us about three miles out, and worked diligently to find whales. He explained that in addition to the spouts, you can sometimes find a smooth trail indicating that they've just traveled through.

We were lucky enough to have local naturalist Rouvaishyana (of State Parks fame) on our boat, and he described the evolution of whales, where different species can be found, how they eat, who they eat, and how big they get (as always, specifics don't stay in my brain, but they're sure as heck interesting when I hear them!). We learned about the types of birds who travelled with us, and a great deal about Humpbacks, too.

DJ and Rouvaishyana would get just as excited as we did when a whale was spotted. They'd turn the boat into

the best position, keeping the required distance. Counting the minutes between the waterspouts, they determined that we were following about four whales, who continued to delight as they gleefully waved their beautiful tails.

Another time when whale-watching, a huge Humpback was meandering straight toward the side of the boat (again with Sub Sea). We all gathered to that side, and he eventually swam right underneath us. So close, we could see his barnacles, bumps, and blow holes. I thought we were gonna tip over, right into his huge mouth, but thankfully, the boat was very stable.

I've often tried whale watching when traveling, but, with the exception of Alaska, have yet to see better exhibits than the local ones. So, I decided long ago that from now on, I'll only go see whales in Morro Bay.

Unless, of course, a mama and her baby are frolicking near the shore!

## Events and Activities

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Cal Poly/California Sea Grant will be hosting a Community Education Workshop on Economic Issues related to Floating Offshore Wind at the Morro Bay Community Center's Multipurpose Room on Thursday February 22 from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. with presentations from a National Renewable Energy Lab researcher on Community Benefit Agreements and a Cal Poly professor on the employment impacts of floating offshore wind for the Central Coast region.

The next Morro Coast Audubon Society Virtual Community Zoom Program takes place Monday, February 19 at 7 p.m. Bird-tripping: Tales from the Road to Tuktoyaktuk is presented by Devon Bradley, Ph.D. via Zoom Meeting with ID: 975 1997 5420 and passcode: 885594.

All MCAS Zoom Community Programs are free and

open to the public. All ages are welcome. No signup/registration required to attend.

In the summer of 2022, Devon Bradley packed up her binoculars, camera, and pup to follow the birds north, all the way to the shores of the Arctic Ocean. Devon carved a circuitous route to Alaska, first along the Cassiar Highway of British Columbia, to Yukon on the famed Alaska Highway, and up to the Arctic Circle via the Dempster Highway – a ribbon of a road that traverses two mountain ranges, extensive subarctic wilderness, and the breeding habitats of some incredible species of birds, on its way to the Mackenzie Delta and Tuktoyaktuk.

In this presentation, Devon will share highlights and anecdotes from this 2.5-month journey.

On Sunday, February 18, 2024, from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m., the Los Osos Valley Garden Club hosts Linda Hicks of California Garden Clubs, Inc., as she discusses summer-flowering bulbs. She will show examples of some bulbs, corms, rhizomes, and tubers and explain how to successfully grow them. These wonderful summer-flowering plants include dahlias, gladiolus, calla lilies, ranunculus, and others.

Hicks joined the Multiflora Garden Club in Paso Robles in 1995, and in 2012, became a National Garden Clubs, Inc Flower Show Judge. She currently judges about a dozen fairs and shows per year. Hicks is interested in horticulture as well as floral design and enjoys growing cactus and succulents in the ground and her greenhouse.

A member talk on "Herbal Medicine: A Brief Overview," will be given by Debbie Jo Bird prior to Hicks' presentation.

The meeting is held at First Baptist Church of Los Osos, 1900 Los Osos Valley Rd., Los Osos (cross street Lariat Drive) and is free and open to the public. No signup/registration is required to attend. If you have any questions, email club President, Wendy McKeown at [info@lovgardenclub.org](mailto:info@lovgardenclub.org).



## Embarcadero Master Leaseholders, LLC

**The Embarcadero Master Leaseholders, LLC (the EML) is composed of a group of business people who lease Tidelands Trust properties along the waterfront from the City of Morro Bay. They partner with the City of Morro Bay to conduct businesses on their leaseholds. The rent they pay to the City for their ground lease, plus a percentage of their sales, proceeds serve to fund more than 90% of the city's Harbor Enterprise Fund, which in turn funds the Harbor Department.**

**EML's purpose is to advocate for and partner with the City of Morro Bay in developing and increasing the revenues from the Tidelands Trust operations for the benefit of all citizens of Morro Bay.**

**Did You Know....** that Morro Bay's Tidelands Leases contributed \$2,000,000 last year to the City's Harbor Enterprise Fund (90% of the Harbor Department's operating budget)?

**Did You Know.....** that the economic activity on the waterfront generated almost \$9 million in taxes and fiscal revenue of one form or another out of the City's current General Fund of \$15.6 million?

**Did You Know .....** that visitors to Morro Bay staying in our hotels and motels paid the City \$4,500,000 in Transient Occupancy taxes last year in 2023 alone?

**To find out more about the relationship between the Morro Bay Embarcadero Leaseholders and the city of Morro Bay, go to:**

Brought to you by the Embarcadero Master Leaseholders, LLC



Cal Poly's Cantabile presents a send-off concert at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 1, in the First Presbyterian Church of San Luis Obispo, which will include works by Hildegard von Bingen, Caroline Shaw and new works by David N. Childs and Cal Poly music Professor Meredith Brammeier.

The concert is a preview of Cantabile's performance at the ACDA Western Region Conference titled "Lift Every Voice and Sing" in Pasadena, California, on March 8. The

Events Continued on page 12

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# Community

Events From page 11

conference represents choral directors, singers and composers from seven states, and is one of the largest choral conferences in the U.S.

Cantabile commissioned two pieces that will be performed at both concerts: "She Weeps" by celebrated choral composer Childs of Dallas, and "Charity Begins Today" by Brammeier. "She Weeps" addresses the crisis of climate change and sustainability. It is scored for viola, percussion, piano and choir and was crafted in conjunction with 2013 Pulitzer Prize-winning composer Caroline Shaw's "Its Motion Keeps," which reflects on the concept of the steady march of time. "Charity Begins Today" is a setting of Saint Teresa of Calcutta, the patron saint of World Youth Day and the Missionaries of Charity who is better known as Mother Teresa and addresses the subject of caring for the poor.

The concert also includes a modern setting by Michael Engelhardt's arrangement of Hildegard von Bingen's "O Antiqui Sancti."

Tickets to the concert are \$20 general and \$10 students. Tickets can be purchased from the Cal Poly Ticket Office between noon and 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday. To order by phone, call 805-SLO-4TIX (805-756-4849).

•••

The following are free events brought to you by the Los Osos Library 2075 Palisades, Ave, 805-528-1862.

• Art Party - Friday, February 16, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Unleash your creativity at our monthly art party! Use your imagination to make unique art pieces using paper, pens, pencils, scissors, glue and more. All materials provided – you bring the inspiration! Creative options available for ages 3-12.

• **Marble Run** - Friday, February 23, 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Come to the Los Osos Library and play with marbles! Build your own creations and have lots of fun. All Ages

• **Plant Swap** - Saturday, February 24, 10 a.m. 4 p.m.

Calling all plant enthusiasts, newbies, and everyone in between! Bring along any plants, cuttings, starts and pots you'd like to share; then take home a new plant for yourself. Don't have a plant to share? We'll have extras, so come anyway! Also, check out our seed library while you're here to inspire your spring garden.

• **Teen Advisory Board Interest Meeting** - Saturday, February 24, 3 – 4 p.m.

Calling all teens! Looking for volunteer or community service hours? Help Librarian Emily create a new Teen Advisory Board! Participation can be listed on job, scholarship and college applications. Help plan teen events, create content for social media, create contest ideas, recommend books, movies and more. Tell me what rad stuff you want to see happen. There will be snacks. For ages 12-18.

•••

The Harold J. Miozzi Art Gallery at Cuesta College presents an exhibition featuring the captivating new paintings of Cobi Moules entitled Showering of Sparkling Bits through Mar. 13. The highly anticipated collection by Moules reimagines the sublime landscape tradition of 19th century Hudson River School paintings as queer spaces of

desire, imbued with a touch of mystery and allure.

In this exhibition, Moules skillfully incorporates silicone embedded with glitter and hair, creating oozing layers that serve as portals into meticulously crafted mise-en-scènes. Within these scenes, one can find unexpected elements, such as jockstraps hanging from trees, draped across rocks, or nestled in logs. The fleshy texture of the silicone alludes to the queer body while also evoking a sense of horror film intrigue, resembling an amorphous organism that poses a threat to the hidden protagonists within the landscape.

Explore the captivating world of Cobi Moules' new paintings at the Harold J. Miozzi Art Gallery, where the artist's unique reinterpretation of the landscape tradition challenges conventions and sparks conversations about desire, identity, and the queer experience.

•••



Join Morro Bay Arts for a 6-week Sketchbook workshop with artist, Sarah A. Pletts on Mondays from March 4 through April 8 from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

Students will learn the art of filling a large sketchbook with images and writing. Dreams, photographs, ideas, and more will be part of the creative process. Participants will work from prompts (optional) sent out before starting and as class continues.

Sarah Pletts paints, writes, instructs, performs and produces dance/theatre for stage and screen. Her career began at 14 in the Miami Ballet Company. Then she went to Pratt Institute in NYC for fine arts and dance. Her visual art is in collections in the U.S. and Europe, and she has illustrated for many publications including Scholastic Magazine, Macmillan, & the Audubon Field Guides.

This workshop is designed for beginners and appropriate for intermediate artists. Bring your choice you medium to class. The following work well for working in sketchbook: colored pencils, watercolors, crayons, pastels or craypas as we create in color.

Reserve your space online: <https://artcentermorrobay.org/index.php/shop/>

•••

Free upcoming February programs at the Morro Bay Library - 625 Harbor St, (805) 772-6394.

• Teen Advisory Board - Saturday, February 17, 3 – 4 p.m.



Looking for volunteer or community service hours? Help Librarian Emily plan teen events, create contest ideas, recommend books, movies and more. There will be snacks. For ages 13-18.

• Marble Run - Wednesday, February 21, 3 – 5 p.m.

Build fun marble maze creations! For ages 4+

• Nintendo Switch - Wednesday, February 28, 3 – 5

p.m.

Master your gaming skills and make new friends with our Nintendo Switch! We will provide one Switch for up to 4 players at a time - feel free to bring your own too. Games include Mario Kart and Just Dance.

•••



Get ready for a nostalgia-filled, feel-good night as "the sounds" of Simon & Garfunkel inspire memories from the past.

Featuring a full band, The Graduates will perform at the Clark Center on Saturday, March at 7:30 p.m.

From the hauntingly ethereal Scarborough Fair to the upbeat and unforgettable Mrs. Robinson... from the mysteriously provocative Sound of Silence to the anthemic Bridge Over Troubled Water, The Graduates is an energetic and heartwarming salute to the music of Simon & Garfunkel.

Tickets available online now at [clarkcenter.org/shows/the-graduates/](http://clarkcenter.org/shows/the-graduates/).

•••

The Cal Poly Symphony's Winter Concert will showcase the talents of four student soloists and a composer at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, March 9, in the Performing Arts Center.

Additionally, the symphony will perform four movements from Sergei Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" that trace the story:



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## LOOKING BACK

A look at our local history, from way back when to now!



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TAKEN IN 1931

The grid of streets on the right side photo is the fully realized version of what San Francisco investors planned for the then named "El Moro" area in 1889. The railway and bridge that never materialized kept the photo on the left from becoming the one on the right for decades. The project was abandoned in 1894. Commerce did exist in the area in 1934 (if not many houses) as seen with the farms on the right (still there) and the orderly crop rows of eucalyptus, and their dense dark groves, seen lower left (the trees now replaced by homes).

Walter Redfield had a similar dream for the area in 1919 and purchased 340 acres of lots for \$1.00 each, selling them from his office in Los Angeles. Richard Otto was the next developer, purchasing 3000 of lots from Redfield, which he sold from his Hollywood office.

A real town was not formed until the 1950s (population 550) when the two most populated areas, Cuesta-by-the-Sea and Baywood Park, grew together. Developers bought land and named their subdivisions: Reiger's Woods, Los Osos Highlands, Vista Del Moro, Cabrillo Estates, Sweet Springs, Morro Palisades. In 1974, population 3200, a final name was selected by the citizens: Los Osos. Names rejected included Portola Pines, Orchidville, Mud Flats, and Bay-Osos (rejected, as the initials were B.O.).

Notice Sata Ysabel goes al the way to Turri road before crossing over.

Image by  
Sullivan Studios collection

"Montagues and Capulets," "Juliet as a Young Girl," "Romeo and Juliet" and "Romeo at the Tomb of Juliet."

Student winners of the symphony's Solo Competition in November will be featured: two instrumentalists, a pair of vocalists and one composer. All are music majors.

The instrumentalists are violist Jayden Perez, of Visalia, California, who will perform the first movement of

William Walton's Viola Concerto and pianist Simone Gabriel of San Luis Obispo, who will play the first movement of Edvard Grieg's Piano Concerto in A Minor, Op. 16.

Soprano Melissa Scarpelli, of Chico, California, will sing Antonín Dvořák's "Song to the Moon" and Helena Fuller, of Vista, California, soprano, will perform Lerner and Loewe's "I Could Have Danced all Night" from "My Fair Lady."

The orchestra will also perform "Falling from Sky" by student composer Wyatt Willard, of San Marcos, California. The symphony is directed by music Professor David Arrivé.

Tickets to the concert are \$15 and 20 for the public, and \$10 for students. Event parking is sponsored by the Performing Arts Center. Tickets are available at the Cal Poly Ticket Office between noon and 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday. To order by phone, call 805-SLO-4TIX (805-756-4849).

•••

Send your event listing at least three weeks in advance to [Editor@EsteroBayNews.com](mailto: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. We do not guarantee publication but try to include as many as we can.

## Letter's To The Editor



### Morro Bay Resident's fear of Wind is Overblown

Thank you, Gail Johnson, for your letter to the Estero Bay News (Estero Bay News Vol. 6, Issue 2), regarding any danger of Morro Bay being "industrialized." Opponents of the proposed offshore wind farm as well as the BESS- the battery storage facility, like Gail, are making the argument that both projects will certainly change the small-town character of Morro Bay.

My thesis was Morro Bay has had a history of industrial uses like 450-foot smokestacks next to our little fishing village and locals and tourists alike have enjoyed the atmosphere despite their presence for the past 70 plus years.

Not that I wouldn't mind if the giant stacks and the old concrete, 150-foot-tall power plant came tumbling down to make room for all kinds of uses — even back to nature.

Guess what? That's just what the company who owns the hundred plus acre property is ready to do.

February 20 meeting

In fact, there is a meeting of the city Planning Commission February 20 to go over ideas to master plan this area for the future after the plant and smokestacks come down.

How is that for less industrialization?

Instead, Gail and opponents of both renewable energy projects, while admitting we need them, fear the "massive" projects will forever change the character of our little fishing village.

Here is what Gail writes in her opposition piece that dredges up assertions she takes as fact about the projects that are overblown or just not correct.

"A major port overhaul is envisioned" and "our bay would be unrecognizable."

"Mother's Beach would be gone" and

the iconic" otters will disappear." The harbor would be dredged to double the depth.

"The view of our harbor would include massive piers, huge ocean-going ships, cranes, and platforms that would dominate the skyline."

Here is the problem. All of this is wild conjecture — hot air over offshore wind. It's much more likely that the harbor would not be dredged any deeper than it is now and any boat over 200 feet would not be able to navigate in the small harbor. Larger boats could not turn around.

Morro Bay officials say discussion is in the very early stage but the kind of boat that would service the wind farms would periodically carry employees and spare parts — not giant turbines or blades that would be coming on larger ships from Long Beach where the units will be assembled, the port's authority has announced. The big industrial stuff is happening there!

Remember that the offshore wind project is still 8 to 10 years away and talks are in the early stage. Gail must be a mindreader! But nobody's going to change the scale of our tiny harbor to anything like Long Beach! And nobody would tolerate the loss of our otter population. It's just not going to happen.

As for fears that the battery storage plant would ruin the view along the Embarcadero, again, I repeat, the view along the Embarcadero is now dominated by a giant mothballed power plant. What would replace it would not even be seen from the visitor's walking area, the BESS will likely be screened by trees. The buildings that would house the battery storage units are two-story, maybe 30 to 35 ft tall compared to the 150-foot tall, mothballed power plant. The bottom line is you won't even

Letters Continued on page 19

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# Community

## Morro Bay Mock Trial Team in Tournament



Morro Bay High School Mock Trial Team is aiming for state competition. Photo submitted

The Morro Bay High School Mock Trial team is back in action at the San Luis Obispo County Mock Trial tournament with a handful of returners from last year's county championship team. The competition runs from through February 15 (post press time) at the San Luis Obispo County courthouse.

Building on last year's success, the team spent the fall and winter scrimmaging in the Bay Area, on zoom, and in Santa Barbara.

"Mock Trial is a strange competition in that you don't want to scrimmage with teams that you'll face at county," said MBHS teacher and coach, Josh Waldman. "If you scrimmage your eventual competitors, they'll know your arguments. We looked to other schools in the area to build our skills to get ready for competition. Scrimmaging seventeen times, we feel like we're entering competition with the skills that we need to make it to the second week of competition and beyond."

Morro Bay High School Mock Trial is a group of eighteen 9th through 12th graders who meet in the evening and work with a staff of volunteers throughout the year. The team is coached by retired attorneys Dan Clement and Gary Ottoson, both of Los Osos, SLO City Attorney Christine Dietrick, also of Los Osos, former Cal Poly Mock Trialer Mckenzie Taffe of Morro Bay, and MBHS alumni and Morro Bay resident Curtis Bradley.

"The coaches log hundreds of volunteer hours to get the students ready. I couldn't ask for a more dedicated group of positive role models and mentors," said Coach Waldman.

The competition has a spot at the state competition in Los Angeles on the line. To help support Morro Bay HS, visit their fundraising page at: <https://www.fanangel.com/campaigns/3922/story>

## Takin' Care of BUSINESS

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

### Tribune Drops to Printing 2-Days a Week

The county's longest standing newspaper is decreasing print edition production from six to two days a week with plans to embrace a digital product.

The San Luis Obispo Tribune announced Feb. 9 that the "sustainability" of the newspaper depended on bolstering its digital presence in favor of print.

"This transition will also allow us to invest in making our digital experiences better, including a big update to the eEdition that I'm excited to share with you soon," wrote Tribune Editor, Joe Tarcia, on the paper's website. "This is another key move for us within the digital transition of the news industry — and a vital step toward the sustainability of The Tribune. Increasingly, San Luis Obispo County residents get their news from their phones, tablets and computers. With that trend in mind, we've become much more digitally focused and have intensified that approach to the point that readers at [sanluisobispo.com](http://sanluisobispo.com) or our eEdition will nearly always see our best work before our print readers."

The Tribune was created in 1939 from a combination of three newspapers founded between 1869 and 1905, and was later acquired by the E. W. Scripps Company.

The change is slated for April 15. Print editions will publish Wednesdays and Sundays and continue to be delivered via regular mail.



### Addis Authors Student Privacy Protection Act

New legislation could bar some operators of websites and apps from selling student data.

Assemblymember Dawn Addis (D-Morro Bay) recently introduced Assembly Bill 1971, the Student Privacy Protection Act.

"There is a clear and concerning lack of protections for California's students when it comes to their data privacy," said Addis. "Advances like those in artificial intelligence have surpassed our state's privacy laws, leaving our students vulnerable to irresponsible uses of their personal data. As technology continues to progress, so should the protections provided to Californians."

The Student Online Personal Information Act (SOPIPA), established in 2014, prohibits organizations that deal primarily with K-12 education data from selling student data or using a student's information to amass a personal profile. SOPIPA was a groundbreaking piece of legislation that provided unprecedented protections to students across California but requires modernization to keep up with exponential growth in the technology sector, Bill supporters said.

AB 1971 adds education-adjacent institutions, including those that assemble and administer standardized tests, into the existing list of organizations that must abide by SOPIPA. Many of these entities deal almost exclusively with K-12 education data and, under AB 1971, will be held to the same standard of privacy.

AB 1971 now awaits referral to policy committee.

## Rotary Drive-Thru BBQ — Order Now



Members of the Rotary Club of Morro Bay headed up by Mike Gerson, will fire up their BBQs again on March 13, 2024 in support of the community.

Take home a full-size Spencer's Premium Tri-Tip Roast along with ranch-style beans, garden salad with ranch dressing, hot sourdough garlic bread loaf and salsa. This is a complete meal that will serve six.

Tickets are \$60 and are available at [morrobayrotary.org](http://morrobayrotary.org). All proceeds go to the club's "Help Us Help Others" Campaign which provides services to Morro Bay.

Pick-up is from 5 – 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 13th at Carla's Country Kitchen at 213 Beach St. Morro Bay.

## SLO's Buy Local Program a Success

Buy local programs within cities have become a way to increase local spending while helping the business community.

The City of San Luis Obispo's Buy Local Bonus program channeled \$943,547 directly into the local economy this holiday season, said Hollie West with the San Luis Obispo Chamber in a news release.

For the fourth year in a row, the City of San Luis Obispo partnered with the SLO Chamber of Commerce on the Buy Local Bonus program to incentivize local shopping and support of small businesses during the holiday season. This year, the City increased their initial investment to \$125,000, purchasing twenty-five \$25 gift cards from qualified local businesses. The gift cards were offered from November 24 through December 23, 2023 to shoppers as a reward for supporting local retailers in the city of SLO.

"At a time when online shopping is the easier choice, we are thrilled to see such a significant number of community members make the intentional choice to spend their money at local retailers," said Molly Cano, Economic Development & Tourism Manager for the City of SLO. "Every dollar spent locally matters, and the Buy Local Bonus program stretches those dollars even further for businesses and shoppers alike."

Even with the additional City investment, the program sold out earlier than expected this season, exhausting the City's funding and generating just under a million dollars in local spending," west reported. "A total of 5,000 shoppers were able to qualify for the promotion, up 23% from 2022, receiving a gift card from one of 170 different local businesses."

Nearly 8,000 qualified receipts were submitted by shoppers during the program, totaling \$818,547 in local spending, reflecting significant increases from the 2022 program that brought in \$780,633.

*Are you or a neighbor Taking Care of Business. Is your business, including non-profits, supporting our community? Maybe you're launching a new business, or you're making updates to your current business model, or re-opening. Perhaps you have a job opportunity, or have been doing some volunteer work, or are collaborating with another business or a non-profit. Or maybe you know someone who is. Submit your awesome local efforts for publication to [Editor@EsteroBayNews.com](mailto:Editor@EsteroBayNews.com).*



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# Sports

## MBHS Student/Athletes of the Month — December 2023

The Morro Bay High School Athletic Booster's Club named four student athletes for recognition as Athletes of the Month for December 2023, honoring two boys and two girls who are intricate members of their respective sports teams.

"The Athletic Boosters," the group said, "solicit each of the coaches to nominate an athlete of their that exhibits outstanding athletic skills but also demonstrates excellent character. The Athletic Boosters would like to congratulate Jane Hotaling from the Girls' Soccer Team; Tailer Morrison from the Girls' Basketball Team; and Justin Campbell and Sergio Mendoza from the Boys' Basketball Team.

### Girls' Soccer

Varsity Girls' Soccer Team Coach, Kim Wishon said of her senior captain, "Jane Hotaling is a captain through and through. Chosen by her team, she exhibits all the qualities of an excellent captain; leadership on and off the field, knowledge of the game, perseverance, grit, kindness and encouragement."



Senior, Jane Hotaling, was named Athlete of the Month for the Girls' Soccer Team.

Hotaling, who received a scholarship to play soccer in college at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Wash., is at the heart of her team's offense.

"As our attacking midfielder," Coach Wishon said, "she has the tenacity to win 50/50 balls, send beautiful through balls, defend at all costs and on top of all that, is our leading goal scorer."

"She is a true team player, encouraging others and at the same time pushing herself to be better."

Coach Wishon added, "Jane is an important part of our team and will be sorely missed next year. Go Wildcats!"

### Girls' Basketball

Girls' Basketball Coach, Alex Engel honored Tailer Morrison as the team's Athlete of the Month. "Tailer," he said, "has been averaging 15.4 points per game, and 10.3 rebounds per game while helping lead our team to a 6-3 record to start the season. She was also selected to the All Tournament Team at the SLO High Mullahey Holiday Classic.



Girls' Basketball Team leader, Tailer Morrison, was named an Athlete of the Month for December 2023 at Morro Bay High School.

She leads the girls on and off the court. "Tailer is also a captain of our team," Coach

Engel said, "and has been a great leader on the court and in the classroom. Tailer is incredibly dedicated and hardworking, and exemplifies everything our basketball program is about!"

### Boys' Basketball



Boys' basketball leader, and defensive specialist, Sergio Mendoza was honored as an Athlete of the Month for December 2023. Boys' basketball player and point guard, Justin Campbell, was honored for his scoring and leadership.



Boys' Basketball Team Coach, Emily Dunn, named two of her charges for honors — Justin Campbell and Sergio Mendoza.

"In his senior season," Coach Dunn said, "Justin Campbell has seamlessly stepped into his role as captain. He not only leads the team with an average of 15 ppg, but also exemplifies outstanding leadership in his role as point guard."

Campbell had a monster game in the school's early-season tournament, the Harding Invitational. "In the game against River City High School, at Morro Bay's Harding Invitational Tournament," Coach Dunn said, "Campbell led the team with 26 points and six rebounds, showcasing his 3-point shooting ability and strategic expertise."

He strives to bring his teammates together. "Justin's impact extends beyond statistics, fostering a team environment that thrives on unity and determination."

She added that Mendoza, "has shown his unwavering commitment to giving 100% effort in each game he plays. Sergio not only contributes an average of 10 ppg but also showcases an exceptional defensive flair with an impressive two steals per game."

Defense is his strength. "Sergio's defensive ability," the coach said, "positions him as the driving force behind the team's formidable defense, making him a standout player on both ends of the court."

Estero Bay News congratulates the December 2023 Athletes of the Month and wishes them and their Pirate teammates much success this year and the future.

Photos submitted.

## MBHS Makes Honor Roll



Morro Bay High students take an 'advanced placement' test as part of the school's award-winning AP course work. Submitted photo

Morro Bay High School was recently awarded a prestigious honor, rewards for its efforts for its advanced students who intend to go to college.

"Morro Bay High School is thrilled to announce that it has received the prestigious College Board's Advanced Placement [AP] School Honor Roll recognition for the 2022-23 school year," the school announced.

The accolades are for the school's "exceptional dedication to expanding access to AP courses and fostering academic success among all of its students."

"The College Board's AP School Honor Roll is a distinguished acknowledgment of schools that have demonstrated remarkable efforts in encouraging more students to enroll in AP courses and providing essential support for their journey toward college achievement."

The school also received the "AP Access Award," which is given in recognition "of its exceptional dedication to ensuring that all students have access to advanced coursework."

"This award celebrates schools that actively encourage enrollment in AP courses by low-income and underrepresented minority students. The school's success in increasing participation from these groups, while maintaining equity and access, is a shining example for educational institutions nationwide."

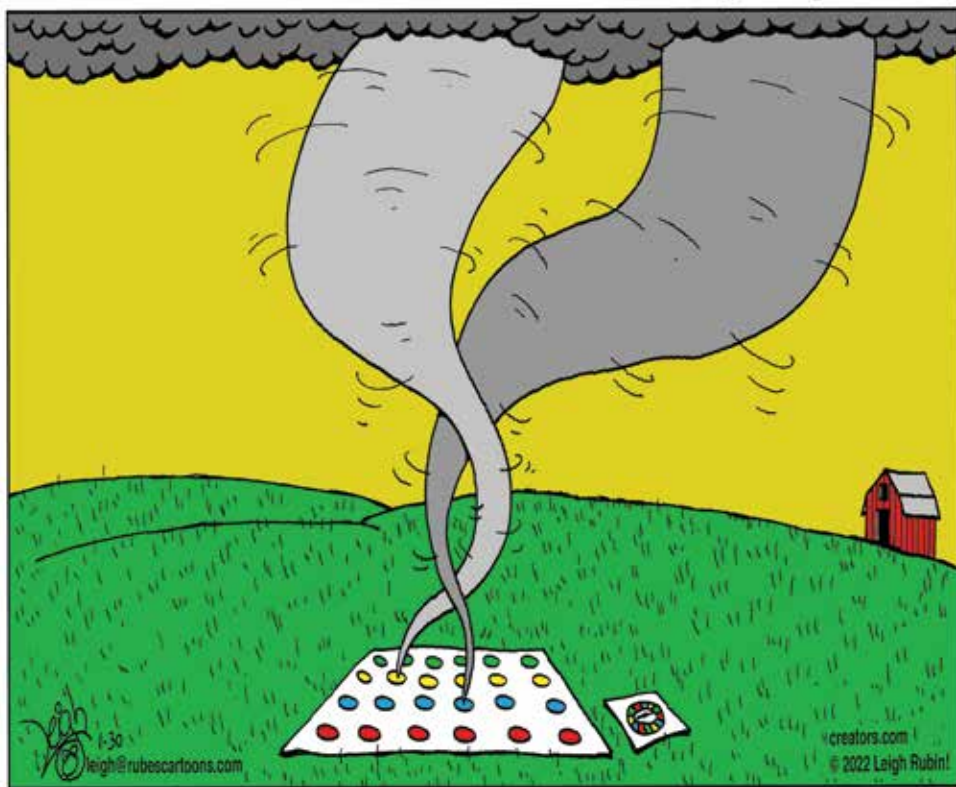
The school has been able to ensure that "a significant percentage of students from low-income backgrounds and underrepresented minorities have taken at least one AP exam before graduation. This achievement demonstrates a clear and effective commitment to providing equitable access to advanced coursework."

According to the release, the more students that take AP course, the more will attend college "and graduate on

Honor Roll Continued on page 19

RUBES®

By Leigh Rubin



Cartoonist Leigh Rubin created this Rubes comic panel and generously shared it with Estero Bay News

The "Twisters playing Twister" cartoon has never been published due to the "unfortunate timing of the originally intended publication date of 1-30-22," Rubin told EBN referencing the tornado in Malaysia where roughly 300 homes were damaged, and many trees and power poles were down. "It was submitted prior to the tornado but I decided to pull it from publication."

Rubes is an internationally syndicated cartoon. For more information, check out rubescartoons.com

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# Community

Two New Motels From page 1



Rendering is what a Quonset Hotel would look like, with most of the changes actually proposed for inside, as a WWII-era former Navy training barracks gets a new life. Submitted photo

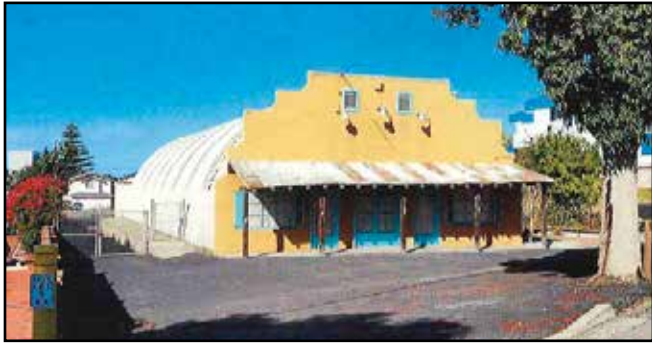


Photo shows the Quonset Hut on Main Street looks now. Submitted photo

an art-deco façade at the front of the building.”

For many years the old hut was an antiques and furniture store and had been approved to become a large retail space with an indoor apartment, but that project never went anywhere.

The cavernous building has sat empty for many years. The plans are to retrofit the building into 10 hotel rooms making mostly cosmetic changes to the exterior of the building and framing in the rooms inside.

It’s a complicated project because of where it sits.

“The site has split zoning,” Toner’s report said, “with the east side of the site in the C-1 Commercial Zoning District (new zoning designation will be Community Commercial) and the west half in the R-2 Zoning District (new zoning designation will be Medium Density Residential). The property is outside the coastal appeals jurisdiction.”

The property has room for 11 parking spaces and will also have a couple of EV chargers too.

“The modifications to the building are minor and do not deviate from features in some original Quonset hut designs used for housing in the mid 1940s,” Toner said. “A determination was made that the project does not require a historical building evaluation because of the previous

changes to the building and the project is restoring the building to the original profile of a Quonset Hut building.”

The site plan would move parking to the rear of the property, the residential zoned side, and use much of the side areas for outdoor patios for the rooms. The only changes to the building will be adding those patio doors and windows for light.

The new design stays true to the lines of the classic Quonset Hut design, but it’s still an 80-year old building that isn’t considered an historic structure, so why not just tear it down and build from scratch?

The applicants, in a letter to the City, said, “The building is such a unique piece of architecture that we believe that it should be renovated and preserved, not demolished to make way for a large-scale street project. Once used as a Boy Scout meeting spot in addition to wedding hall, the building has not been occupied as a business since prior to the pandemic.”

The Quonset Hotel will have to be approved by the City Council, expected at an upcoming meeting. It is outside the Coastal Commission appeals zone, so if the Council approves of the plans, it would move to the “building” side of the process.

## Libertine is Approved

One of the few waterfront lease sites remaining to be redeveloped has flown through the City’s approval process and will now go to the Coastal Commission.

City Council unanimously approved a redevelopment plan for the Libertine Brewing Co., located at 801 Embarcadero, that will see the entire site almost completely torn down and rebuilt.

It’s an extensive project that includes the first steps towards the City’s Centennial Plaza concept.

Planning Manager Cindy Jacinth’s report reads: “The project includes demolition of a majority of the 4,677 square feet, 2-story building with basement. The project would be reconstructed as a 5,206 s.f. mixed-use building adding an additional 529 s.f. The project proposes a new 7-unit hotel on the second floor with public viewing deck; first floor restaurant and coffee shop uses; and expanded basement area for the Libertine Brewing business.

“Site improvements include multiple public coastal access enhancements including a new 15’ wide Harborwalk gap extension, replacement of 7 steel piles, sleeving of 3 existing wood pilings, replacement of existing dock with new dock area with ramp, 2 side-tie boat slips, and public access improvements to the adjacent street end by removing public parking in the street end to create a public plaza, and master sign program approval.”

The Libertine’s redevelopment would come on the heels of the complete redevelopment next door, as the on-time restaurant and retail space is being reborn into Harborwalk Plaza, a 2-story motel-retail-restaurant development nearing completion now.

The Libertine owners closed the business down several weeks ago in anticipation of the new project. Despite a requirement in the lease that the business remain open, closing it was deemed OK since the plan is to tear it all down. But according to the Harbor Director, they still must pay the base rent, which is listed at over \$40,000 a year.

The City Council did hedge on one aspect of the project — creating the Centennial Plaza concept. The new development will eat up parking spaces on the street end, an area that was intended to become a public open area in conjunction with a remodeling of the Giant Chessboard Park across the street and up to the Centennial Stairway and Parkway on Market Avenue.

Though that design is still on the books it’s never likely to be built, as the City has been unable to find a buyer for the Market Avenue property despite several different real estate firms taking on the listing.

Though the new Libertine will eat up several parking spaces, the City Council decided to not make them put in the plaza features for now. Rose’s Landing across the street is also supposed to contribute to the plaza.

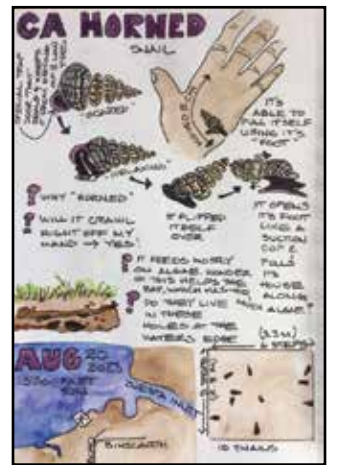
The Libertine redevelopment will also plug a hole in the Harborwalk, connecting to the new walkway behind Rose’s Landing and the new Harborwalk Plaza’s walkway on the north side.

Journaling Together From page 1

scribes journaling during a nature visit as interactive “collecting and organizing observations, questions, connections, and explanations on pages of a notebook using words, pictures, and numbers.” Mary has experience at least two of Laws’ training retreats.

Professionally Mary Strum has been a nutritionist for forty years so why the interest in promoting a Central Coast Nature Journal Club? At the retreat led by Laws at his Sierra Nevada Field Camp, she said, “In one week, we were twenty-five people who are still connected. I loved being in that community and I thought there must be people around Los Osos who would love to be in a group with nature journaling as our common reason to get together.”

Why a February gathering so soon after the Bird Festival? Timing was perfect to launch Mary’s quest to coalesce a local group. She was able to spend the entire Community



A nature journaling event takes place at the Los Osos Elfin Forest on Sunday, February 25 from 10 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Photo by Mary Strum

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# Community

Family Day introducing attendees to Nature Journaling. She has been preparing the February gathering with her mentor Anne Marie Bergen, Program Associate for the Wild Wonder Foundation. Laws is the president of the nonprofit foundation created to encourage nature journaling worldwide. Laws' books and speaking engagements have been the catalyst to more than 45,000 clubs throughout the western hemisphere according to Wild Wonder's Facebook page.

In fact, Mary shared a copy of "Your Quick Start Guide to Nature Journaling," which is a colorful booklet that can be downloaded at [www.wildwonder.org](http://www.wildwonder.org) onto a single 8X11 piece of paper and folded pocket-sized for easy reference. It has useful tips and suggested supplies anticipating a first outing on 2/25 at the Elfin Forest.

Why does Mary Sturm want to share nature journaling? "I am not the artist in the family. My brother, Chris, is but I love being in nature. Usually I'm a loner, but at retreats I have enjoyed the feeling of being connected. It also forces me to slow down." She admits her sketching skills have grown with continued practice over the past ten years, including her time spent as a substitute naturalist at Camp KEEP giving nature walks to the students. "I don't journal to produce a pretty picture. Everyone needs to start where they are comfortable and not be intimidated by expectations of a finished product."

What can you expect February 25? Mary will introduce nature journaling as an ongoing club activity. Families are welcome with parent supervision. Better yet, prepare the children to be involved in the process of searching and sketching. After her presentation, time will be allowed for wandering the Elfin Forest to intently discover something of interest to record in your personal journal. Then the group will reconvene to discuss their experience and share their journaling if so inclined.

Why my sincere endorsement? I'm confident you will enjoy the process, learn some tips to enhance your nature walks and meet like-minded new associates like Mary Sturm. She guarantees, "If you give into it, the world will melt away."

How did I arrive at my endorsement? I intended this column to focus on my personal quest learning about nature journaling with author/illustrator Sharon Lovejoy at the 2024 Morro Bay Bird Festival, but during Sharon's workshop she recommended the group take the next step and meet with Mary on a more regular basis. My column deadline required I share Mary's mission and invitation first.

However, allow me a bit of teaser for a future story about Sharon Lovejoy. Over the years I have written numerous articles about the Morro Bay Bird Festival, but I was always onto the next story instead of gifting myself with one of its many alluring workshops. Sharon's session fulfilled a trifecta of reasons I needed to be present: (1) Sharon is a beloved SLO-based multiple New York Times Best Selling author ([www.sharonlovejoy.com](http://www.sharonlovejoy.com)). Some of her books are "Roots Shoots Buckets & Boots," "Sunflower Houses," and her latest "Camp Granny" — this latter title she assured me did not intend in any way to leave out

Mommy, Auntie, Sissy, and Bestie. (2) I have fond memories of visiting Heart's Ease in Cambria with my daughter. Sharon once owned the property and welcomed visitors to her shop and garden. She explained when her author-life changed and writing, traveling, and speaking ruled, she sold the store. Current owner, Kathryn Clayton, continues to welcome customers at Spellbound Herbs Gift Shop & Garden. (3) My goal attending Sharon's workshop was to enhance my personal writing skills learning "How to Capture Your Moments & Memories on Paper" and sharing her story and tips in a future column.

Indeed, on January 14th at the SLO Botanical Garden I did attend Sharon's sold-out-plus-plus workshop. I did take lots of notes. And I did reconnect and visit with Sharon about Heart's Ease. I also met Sharon's wonderfully supportive, business-manager husband, Jeff Prostovich, and I learned Sharon's mission is "cultivating wonder" one book at a time." She is just as perky, just as lovely, just as sincere and interested in sharing her experiences with bugs and leaves, seeds and acorns, herons and owl poop, live things, and dead things all because they tell a story, and she is storyteller of nature's scientific curiosities.

I plan to expand what I learned workshopping with Sharon Lovejoy — but only after I experience Camp Granny magic with my great-great grandson, Darius. Sharon is a doer ... I better "do" before I report.

Meanwhile, if you are considering participating in the Central Coast Nature Journaling Club get-together on February 25th at the Elfin Forest, be sure to ask Mary to tell all about her face-off with Mama Bear. Yes, another teaser! Mary Sturm is the only one who can tell her own nature story, so you won't soon forget it or her quest.

**Grateful** From page 1

"Similar position to what I am doing here, a little more money and less than half the commute...I live in Santa Maria."

Pismo Beach's City Hall sits on Matte Road east of Hwy 101 on a hill overlooking San Luis Bay — a million-dollar view really — and he's been driving past it twice a day for nearly a decade. Pismo Beach isn't a stranger to him either, as he came to Morro Bay from Pismo Beach way back when.

Graham, "joined the City of Morro Bay in July of 2014 as the Planning Manager," the City said in a news release about Graham's imminent departure, "after having worked in the City of Pismo Beach's Planning Department for a decade."

Cutting his daily grind behind the wheel by more than half (down from over 2 hours a day to less than 1 hour) means he can get back to his 99-year-old home and family

sooner, too.

He explained that Michael Codron, a retired former community development director and planner with the City of SLO, has been filling in for Pismo as interim community development director. He and Graham will switch places.

Codron was slated to be retained by the city council to be the acting community development director while they do a job search for a permanent replacement. (The council was to vote on his contract, paid at \$84 an hour, at its Feb. 13 meeting.)

"I go there on the 19th," Graham said, "and he comes here on the 20th." He added that Codron is a good choice for the temp job as he's very familiar with the complicated development process here. "He's been around for a while," Graham said. "He should be able to keep things afloat."

Codron, a public employee retiree, was at Pismo for just a month, until they hired Graham. In Morro Bay, his contract runs until the City Manager, Yvonne Kimball, hires someone or up to a year (expiring Feb. 9, 2025). (The Public Employee Retirement System places limits on how much a retiree can work and get paid in such temp jobs.)

The search for Graham's replacement has already started, according to Kimball's report on Codron's contract.

"He's very qualified," Graham said, "and knows the Central Coast."

That seemingly innocuous statement though, gets at the heart of why Morro Bay's development process is complex, perhaps even a little confounding.

Graham sat down for an exit interview with Estero Bay News, meeting in the Zen Garden at Top Dog Coffee on Main Street. He spoke about the importance of having clear guidelines in a town's planning system.

The Planning Department and its rules and policies in large part, "help determine a person's investment in a community," he said, adding that not having clear standards can deter that investment. "It goes a long way to help," he said.

He came in with a goal of streamlining the planning process and believes they've made progress towards that end. "The process is convoluted," he said, "and we've been able to streamline that somewhat."

He explained that much of the bottle-neck of the past was with upward communication — going from the planning commission to the city council and then the Coastal Commission, which often has the last say in local development projects, especially along the Embarcadero.

Now you go from the planning commission to the council and then to Coastal "and you're done," he said. "Unless the Coastal Commission makes a lot of changes."

He credits a change in their City-Coastal Commission relationship — including a movement to solicit their input early in the planning process — with this streamlining.

The old bottleneck "created big delays," he said. "It can make a project unbuildable," because with development projects — time is money.

He lists completion and certification of the General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance as major accomplishments in his tenure. The General Plan was completed in 2021 and

**Grateful** Continued on page 18



Morro Bay Community Development Director, Scot Graham, is leaving the City for a job with Pismo Beach. Photo by Neil Farrell

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# Community

Grateful From page 17

the Zoning Ordinance in 2022, but the Zoning part of the plan hit a snag.

"We sent it to the Coastal Commission for certification," he said, "And they sent it back with changes. We've been working with them on edits and it's now back at the Commission for certification." He expects that approval to come in March.

"It was a big lift for myself and Planning Manager Cindy Jacinth," Graham said. "That was a lot of work and took a long time — and then COVID hit." The pandemic's effects on government and private business slowed everything down. "It was difficult to bring it to the finish line."

Among the big projects he's overseen is the 83-room Hampton Inn on Atascadero Road, the second largest motel in town. It helped that there was already a "hedge row" of trees blocking the view from the highway, eliminating one big concern with coastal developments — preserving public views of the ocean. "We also got Dog Beach," Graham said. "There're a lot of wins there."

Dog Beach is a stretch of Morro Strand north of North Point Natural Area. It was owned by Chevron, but the Cayucos Sanitary District, SLO County, local conservation groups, Chevron and the City teamed up to get it and then bring it under the City's purview. It's slated to remain an off-leash beach for dogs in perpetuity.

He's also proud that they got the update on the Housing Element of the General Plan approved in just a couple of days and praised the work of Amy Sinsheimer of Place Works, a consultant, for helping with that effort.

As for bad projects, he can't think of any. "There's been no cringe-worthy projects," he laughs. He does admit to having concerns about some of the projects the City has coming up like the big battery storage project and the offshore wind farms.

Power plant owner, Vistra Energy, is butting up against growing opposition to its plans for the 600-megawatt Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) sited on the power plant property.

The BESS Project's Environmental Impact Report draft should be released for comments "within the next 30 days," Graham predicted. "It's starting to get ramped up," he said of the project. But when the EIR is finally released, "I'll be gone," he said with a sly smile.

The draft will be out for 60 days to take comments and, "I suspect there will be a lot of comments." He anticipates the consultant, Rincon, to hold several public meetings on the DEIR at the Planning Commission getting it in late spring or early summer.

But the BESS has another significant issue — a citizen's initiative (Measure A-24) on the November Ballot that would lock in the existing zoning at the power plant (and waterfront areas north of Beach Street) and call for voter approval if any project must have a zoning change.

"If it passes," he said, "you have to question whether the project goes through — they'd need a vote of the people, or Vistra could bypass the City under AB 205."

Assembly Bill 205, signed into law last summer by the Governor, created a pathway for projects like Vistra's BESS to ask the Energy Commission to intervene and take over permitting, if it is unable to win approval on the local level.

Graham confesses that no one knows what an AB 205 process looks like, as it's never been done before, or what control the City would lose over the permitting. "They could take the permitting authority away from the City," he said, "and give it to the State. We'll have to see a project go through the CEC and come out on the other side. It's unknown what the City's role would be then."

There's another sticky question — "Does the State Energy Policy override the will of the citizens?" he asked. "I don't have a great feeling of what's going to happen. There's a lot of angst in the community, because we don't know what the CEC process is like."

He said public relations still play a large part in developments, something he tried to explain to Texas-based Vistra. It comes down to "How well you tell the story?" Graham said. "It's 'How well do you inform the community?'"

He noted that Morro Bay has a very engaged citizenry.

Woodie From page 1

local car shows, Henderson just might have been the one who brought it back to life, that's how many of these unique cars he's worked on since opening the shop in 1999.

And it's a craft he's honed over a lifetime. "My dad was a boat builder," he explains, taking a break from working in the shop, which has the down-home aroma of sawdust (he laughs that it smells like "burnt wood").

Historically, Woody station wagons were manufactured by Ford, Chevy and Mercury from about 1928-1951. The bodies of the early models were constructed entirely out of wood, he explains opening the solid wooden door of a 1948 Chevy Fleetmaster, whose entire back half of the body is wood. He compares it to another 1950s wagon, also in the shop, that has steel doors with wood attached to the outside.

They did this for strength, he explains.

He's been working on the '48 Fleetmaster for over 2 years. When it came in, it didn't have the wooden portion of the body and Henderson said he had a heck of a time rebuilding it from scratch. Since that time it's been a labor of love, literally recreating the vehicle's original body, piece by agonizing piece.

But patience is something he's got loads of. Doing this kind of specialty carpentry work is nothing if not detailed. Each piece is created individually and then pieced together to make it all fit together almost seamlessly.

That involves a lot of cutting, shaping, planning and sanding, lots and lots of sanding. Indeed, sanding is the one thing he says is the worst aspect of his craft.

He started working with his dad at Driskoll's Marine down in San Diego, where he hails from. Jerry Driskoll, who started the business down south, moved to Morro Bay upon retirement and took over the old Fishermen's Dock and former processing plant.

Driskoll revitalized the docks, rebuilt the wharf and transformed the processing plant into a takeout fish & chips and fish market that's been carried on by Dockside, Too.

"That's where I started," Henderson says. "We built some awfully nice sailboats."

He says the boat building industry has changed over the years and they started building bigger and bigger boats and then motor yachts, working with exotic woods like

"You need to have a game plan," he explained. "If not, then you get an initiative against your project."

He's also leery of the proposed giant wind farms being pursued by the federal government, with much support from State officials, which is also starting to see opposition build. Graham called the wind farms "a long-term play."

He said they will have to expand one of the harbor's T-piers to accommodate the expected ships that will service the farms (the deep-water assembly port needed for the project can't be built locally). And, he said no one is accepting the idea of widening or deepening the harbor's navigable channel to accommodate larger boats.

He's very grateful for his time here. "Morro Bay has afforded me and given me the experience; I can't say how appreciative I am.

"I will always miss the people, the business owners, and the citizens."

He's grateful for the amount of engagement from citizens that he's gotten. "It's been an amazing experience," he said. "I'm so much better of a planner and director" because of it.



David Henderson of David Henderson's Classic Woodworks shop poses with a 1948 Chevy Fleetmaster wagon that he's been rebuilding for over 2 years now in his little custom woodworking shop in Morro Bay. Photo by Neil Farrell

teak.

"I spent a lot of years working with my father," he says. When dad retired, people started bringing him Woody wagons and boats to work on and he helped his dad on those side jobs as well, learning all the tricks of the trade. "My skill set lends itself to it," he says.

In 1999, he and wife Lisa were ready to leave San Diego and look for a simpler life. They were living in a motorhome and took off in search of a new home. They landed in Morro Bay and fell in love with the place. "We had been living in a motorhome and traveled for a year hitting different spots looking for where we wanted to land.

"My wife was determined" to move up here, he laughs. They discovered an empty former auto shop owned by Howard Caccia and rented it for his new workshop. "We had the space rented before we moved up here."

For many years he split his time between the Morro Bay Woody shop and the boatbuilding plant in San Diego. "In San Diego," he says, "we work on a lot of custom yachts, teak interiors and decks, "whatever the customer wants."

He explains that modern design tools like CAD design programs, a tech can bring up a boat's scanned interior on a computer and customers can go through looking at different woods and finishes, ordering whatever they like.

They can even extend the length of boats by cutting and adding hull and decks and extending the length of a boat. He recalls one boat they worked on for 5 years.

Another was an 83-foot Sportfisher that they cut apart and extended. It was, "A once-in-a-lifetime project," he says. Such boats are normally 65 to 120-feet and "By the time we stretched this one, it was almost 100 feet," he says.

But custom boat building is a dying art. "Throughout the industry," he explains, "like in San Diego, there are a few guys who can make a go of it. (But) The opportunities to learn this trade are not too prevalent."

And each car that comes in to the shop needs a different amount of work. "Wood restoration and construction projects vary," he says, "depending on whatever state they come to me. Some come mostly together, and might have some bad spots; so it's a replace and refinish job."

It is wood, a natural product that, well, deteriorates over time and gets attacked by insects and rotted out, just as steel cars rust.

The '48 Chevy that's taken so long (with a lot of work left to go) is a complete rebuild, and came in with no cab left. It's taken a long time, but Henderson says there hasn't been any rush on it. But when it's done, it'll probably be close to \$100,000 worth of work. "It's a tremendous amount of work," he says, "especially from where I started."

He loves working with wood. "It's therapeutic to me," he says, glancing around the shop, which has surprisingly few tools; given the incredible detail that he has to achieve with each individual piece on a Woody wagon. Patterns for



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# Community

wood pieces are stacked up against the wall, many of which he had to make himself. If he has an old piece, he can fashion a new one from it.

He also enjoys talking with folks who walk by on their way somewhere downtown or to the dry cleaners next door. They stop in when he has the roll-up door to the shop open.

The worst thing is sanding, lots and lots of sanding. With the '48 he says, once the hardware is in place and the doors fitted and latched, he'll do finish sanding to get the seams right. Then he'll take it apart again for more sanding, finish it with clear lacquer, then more sanding. But it's worth it.

"I get a lot of satisfaction," he says. "People appreciate what you've done and the folks you do it for really appreciate it."

Lovers of Woody wagons are a close bunch with car clubs established all over. They do shows, and everybody gets together. "It's a pretty tight-knit group," he says.

## By the Sea Productions Premiering an Original Musical Revue



The latest performance from By the Sea Productions is 'It Takes Two.' The cast is Kelly Fitzgerald McCraw, Michael Kaplan, Ritchie Bermudez, Mark Pietri, Sholly Von Stein.

"It Takes Two" is the title of an original musical revue written by local creative team Michael Kaplan and Mark Pietri, whose previous shows include "Danny Come Home" and "We're Canceling Cable (And Other Empty Threats)." This premiere performance is presented by Morro Bay's By the Sea Productions as our first musical venture.

The song and dance filled revue celebrates the risky business of falling in love, with nineteen original songs and dialogue offering a funny and touching look at romance. Directed by Kaplan, with accompaniment by Pietri, the cast includes Ritchie Bermudez, Kelly Fitzgerald McCraw, and Sholly VonStein.

"It Takes Two" plays for two weekends, February 23-25 and March 1-3 at 545 Shasta Ave. in Morro Bay. Reservations and tickets are available at [bytheseaproductions.org](http://bytheseaproductions.org) and 805-776-3287.

LettersFrom page 15

know it's there.

This is an opportunity not to be feared. As for answers to questions about the BESS project, the city now expects the Draft EIR will get a hearing in front of the planning commission in May or June.

John Lindt  
Los Osos

## The Challenges of Being a Good Neighbor

It's interesting to note (at least to me) that if there is a scale of priorities when moving to a new city or place, the neighbors you get is, well, rather a crapshoot and pretty much down on the list.

You no doubt first consider the town you have chosen (if that is going to be new), the general ambiance of the neighborhood, and particulars such as proximity to work and shopping amenities etc.

Now if you have friendly neighbors, all the better. Well, maybe not TOO friendly if over time all they want to do is borrow things from you and lack what you feel is adequate reciprocation. Such as neighbors who can keep an eye out on your place (at least casually) when you are gone, say, on a trip. That is certainly a big plus.

Now we have (or, rather had) a friendly neighbor who offered to water some plants we had on a deck from time to time, and being fairly close she could easily see what was going on near her. Since we have run a small home based bed and breakfast with various cars parking in our driveway or along the front portion of our property, it has been rather unavoidable that a parking lot feel would arise from time to time.

As a single woman who'd lived in Cambria for longer than we have (we ourselves are going on 20 plus years) we figured, who we'll call Carol, would be a predictable constant. To reciprocate her favors we often brought her my wife's home baked chocolate chip cookies (yummy!). At one point we offered to take her out to lunch or dinner, and I confess this never happened for whatever reasons. I think it may have partially been to avoid getting to know her TOO well, although in casual conversations we learned she had a very big family of sisters who didn't live locally--but that's about it. In retrospect I wish we'd been a little chumier.

To understand how fragile a neighborhood liaison can be, however, this is what happened with us and Carol. We knew she didn't like vehicles, especially trucks, parking on the south side of her residence along a vacant lot because they often blocked her view of vehicles traveling north on our street -- and traveling way too fast. This posed a safety issue for her in backing her own vehicle out onto the street.

Now sometimes our b&b customers, or contractors, needed extra parking so they would park along that side Carol was concerned about. It must have been stressful juggling the parking situation one day but when she objected to what was going on, my wife, uncharacteristically, shouted at her to, in effect, "cool it." I knew that wasn't going to go over very well, and it definitely didn't.

The next time I climbed up her steps (with cookies in hand, a possible truce offer) she simply refused them and said to me, "I am done with both of you."

That hurt and still does. I have never thought of myself as anything but a good neighbor wherever I have lived but I guess I will have to simply live with this permanent rejection of my/our neighbor cred.

William Seavey  
Cambria

– Viewpoint –

## Letter to Supervisors and California Coastal Commission

Greetings California Coastal Commissioner Heidi Harmon and SLO County Supervisor Bruce Gibson, My name is Paul Andreano and I am a resident of Cayucos in SLO County. I am writing today to ask both the Commission and the County to help stop what amounts to illegal discharge and dumping on the beach by several homeowners along Studio Drive, south of Del Mar St., in Cayucos.

As you are aware, severe storms and king tides in December/January caused significant erosion to the coastal bluffs and cliffs in Cayucos. A number of property owners along the beach responded by filling poly-woven (plastic) sandbags with beach sand as a form of erosion control. Now, after some time has passed, the plastic bags have started to become degraded by sunlight and abraded by driftwood and high tides. The result is what amounts to huge dump sites of plastic that are now contaminating the beaches and water with trash. The poly-woven bags break down first into strands that could become entangled with wildlife and work the plastic deeper into the food web. I have never before seen so much plastic on one of the north coast beaches. Today, microplastics are a significant portion of the wrack line throughout this stretch of beach and I would entreat you to go see for yourself, my photos hardly do it justice.

These homeowners chose the cheapest possible way to provide protection to their multi-million dollar properties: plastic bags shoveled full of beach sand. It is now painfully obvious how much litter they have created. Today I watched a man who was piling driftwood on top of his plastic bags, either in an effort to conceal them or make them more resilient. Unless these people are required to remove the bags, the plastic will reside on our beaches and in our waters for generations.

I sincerely hope one of you is concerned enough to take this up. I'm really not sure who else to turn to, and I know both of you have been strong champions of environmental causes.

Thank you both for your time and I look forward to hearing back. Please, if you can think of someone that I should be contacting instead, I would appreciate their contact information.

Update to Original Letter

I just spoke with Bruce Gibson's office. They are aware of the problem. They said the plan is to leave it alone until spring! Then the County intends to pay EcoSLO to remove all of the plastic from the beach.

So they are planning on letting all this plastic leech for the rest of the winter. Then the County will foot the bill to clean up the mess these (many out of town) property owners made. Apparently there is an issue with "proving" the property owners actually filled the bags on their property.

Paul Andreano  
Cayucos

## Letter's To The Editor Policy

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

Honor Roll From page 15

time."

Such advanced courses also expose students to the kind of coursework that they can expect to see in college. MBHS had expanded its AP course offerings at the start of the school year and now covers 14 classes in the 2023-24 school year, the announcement said.

The MBHS Principal Scott Schalde said, "Receiving the College Board's AP School Honor Roll and the AP Access Award is a testament to the collective dedication of Morro Bay High School's teachers, counselors, administrators, students, and parents. This recognition underscores the school's unwavering commitment to academic excellence and its pursuit of inclusive educational opportunities for all.

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