

Much Ado About a Tiny Bridge



The 70-foot long Colin C. Reilly Memorial Bridge crosses Old Creek on the east side of Hwy 1 in Cayucos. The County recently re-installed bollards blocking so-called slow speed vehicles [LSVs] from using it to get into Downtown Cayucos. Photo by Neil Farrell

By Neil Farrell

South Cayucos residents are at odds with the County over a small bicycle bridge they say is vitally important to safely get from that end of town into Downtown Cayucos.

It's a tale of changing community needs and evolving modes of transportation, wrapped up in a conundrum that promises to roll on for some time, as officials search for a workable solution.

It's called the "Colin C. Reilly Memorial Bridge" or "Cabrillo Bridge" to folks in the neighborhood on the eastern side of Hwy 1 off Ocean Boulevard.

It was built by the County after the property owner donated an easement across Old Creek below the cemetery and is part of a bike path that runs up to 13th Street below Whale Rock Dam.

According to a post on Nextdoor from County Public Works, the bridge's namesake, Reilly, "was cycling north of Cayucos when he was struck and killed by a vehicle. Mr. Reilly was a long-time county resident, active in the bicycle community and an advocate for promoting bicycle safety."

It's a Class 1 (separated) bike and pedestrian path, "which is specifically intended for use by bicycles and pedestrians," the County said, "and the use of motorized vehicles is prohibited by State Law [Streets and Highway Code 890]. This is why the bridge is signed with 'No

motor vehicles' at both approaches and the bollards are in place."

The 12-foot wide and 70-foot long, wooden bridge has apparently always had bollards — pole barriers designed to keep cars and trucks from using it. But at some point, someone cut the locks off the poles and threw the poles into the creek, opening up the entirety of the bridge width.

This was likely done because someone wanted to drive an electric cart over it, according to John Waddell an assistant director of Public Works for the County. This was done without the County's knowledge or permission, he added.

Then earlier this year, they received a complaint from someone who was walking over the bridge and had to dodge a fast-moving golf cart, Waddell explained.

"That surprised us," he said.

The County apparently didn't know the bollards had been removed, or that people in the neighborhood were driving over the bridge in so-called, "low-speed vehicles" or LSVs, street legal electric carts that have been gaining in popularity, especially in beach towns.

Folks use LSVs to tootle around town, as they are legal for licensed drivers to take on surface streets. There are some rules of the road of course.

They must go at least 20 mph (max 25 mph) and have safety gear — headlights, brake lights, turn signals, seatbelts, a speedometer, a horn, fenders and a windshield,

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New Study Throws Water on Sustainability of Pumping



By Neil Farrell

New studies on the groundwater basin in Los Osos and how the water companies are utilizing it, has thrown doubt on the prospect of the town seeing some growth in the near future, and analyzed the effectiveness of various attempts to slow seawater intrusion into the drinking water basin.

Released in draft form to the Basin Management Committee, a partnership of the three water purveyors and SLO County, and formed as a result of a court order that required them to work together to better manage the underground aquifer — the only drinking water source for the community. The idea is to work together to slow and hopefully reverse seawater intrusion.

The new study changes the methodology used in the collection and analysis of the data from "Static" or Steady Modeling, meaning no changes are considered, to a "Transient Model," which takes into account fluctuations in supply caused by things like dry and wet winters.

This transient model method has been a long time in the works, explained Ron Munds, the executive director of the Los Osos Community Services District. He likened the difference in the methodology to the difference in a 2D and 3D image. With the static method, he said, you couldn't make many assumptions about usage and impacts.

After securing a State Water Resources Control Board grant, they hired Cleath-Harris Geologists to conduct the new study, which Munds said is the state-of-the-art method in use today.

CHG's model was peer reviewed by two other firms, Munds said, "to make sure it was valid."

The study pegged the annual usage at 1,830 acre-feet

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Nonprofit of the Year Ready for Challenges

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

The SLO Noor Foundation was recently recognized as the 2025 "Nonprofit of the Year" by California State Assembly member Dawn Addis representing District 30, which includes parts of Monterey, San Luis Obispo, and Santa Cruz counties.

The SLO Noor Foundation (SLONF) operates two free, physical brick and mortar locations in San Luis Obispo (a medical, vision, and mental health clinic; and a dental clinic). Additionally, they operate the Free Mobile Health Clinic, serving all of San Luis Obispo County; the Telehealth Care & Virtual Support Program; and the Women's Mobile Health Unit, which serves the Santa Maria Valley in partnership with the Cal Poly Health Research Center. The nonprofit serves uninsured adults in San Luis Obispo and northern Santa Barbara counties, regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, religion, sexual orientation, or gender.

"It's an incredible honor that we're so excited about," SLONF's Executive Director, David Parro, told Estero Bay News. "Being honored this year was very humbling and inspiring; it truly was

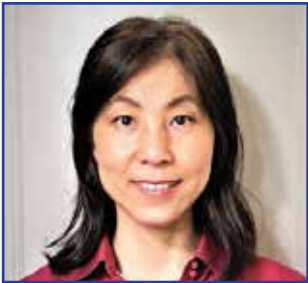
Challenges Continued on page 20



The SLO Noor Foundation California recently received the 2025 Nonprofit of the Year award for District 30. Pictured at the Nonprofits Day event at the state capitol in Sacramento are David Parro, executive director, SLO Noor Foundation; California State Assemblymember Dawn Addis; Barbara Alarcon, SLO Medical Clinic manager. Photo submitted

Morro Bay City Council Fires City Manager

By Neil Farrell



A split Morro Bay City Council voted on June 24 to fire City Manager, Yvonne Kimball, during a closed session meeting.

Estero Bay News had received a tip from someone who was at the June 24 meeting saying the City Manager had been fired the night before.

EBN emailed Kimball at her City email address, seeking to do some rumor control, and copied the Mayor on the

City Manager Continued on page 21

Council OKs Bonita Street Firehouse Rebuild

By Neil Farrell



The Morro Bay City Council took a second step in a long process to rebuild an old fire station in North Morro Bay to improve response times and maybe save more lives.

The City Council recently approved moving forward with designs to rebuild the living quarters for the old Bonita Street Fire Station, a remnant from the old "Town of El Morro," which is what North Morro Bay was called before

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News

New Study Looks at MBFD Operations



Morro Bay Fire Chief Daniel McCrain announced the hiring of three seasonal firefighters to boost staffing for the busy summer months. They are from left: Blake Alspach, Mikial Choboian, Cole Berkeland. Photo courtesy MBFD

By Neil Farrell

A new study on the operations of the Morro Bay Fire Department leaves the City wanting, as new standards for firefighters call for greatly increased staffing and potentially reopening the long-closed Bonita Street Fire Station. Fire Chief Daniel McCrain’s report on a new, “Community Risk Assessment and Standards Cover” for MBFD builds on a similar study conducted in 2003 that set the goal of increasing staffing levels so there are at least four firefighters on duty during each of the department’s four shifts.

“A community risk assessment [CRA],” the report said, “is a systematic process to identify, analyze, and evaluate a community’s risks. It is a critical step in risk reduction and management, aiming to understand the potential hazards [natural or manufactured], vulnerabilities of the community [such as socio-economic conditions, public infrastructure, and environmental factors], and the capacities or resources available to mitigate and respond to these risks. The main objectives of a community risk assessment include Identifying hazards, analyzing vulnerabilities, evaluating capacities and resources, a risk analysis, developing strategies to mitigate risks, and implementation and monitoring of risk reduction strategies.”

Natural hazards Morro Bay needs to be concerned with include wildfires, flooding, tsunamis, earthquakes and severe weather events, the normal things all Californians are concerned with.

Since 1995, the City has experienced severe weather — cold snaps and hard rains — repeatedly, with an overflowed Morro Creek flooding onto Main Street and Hwy 1, effectively cutting the city in half on at least two occasions.

Chief McCrain added, “This report also identified demographic vulnerabilities such as people with disabilities, elderly, language barriers, and populations lacking adequate housing or health insurance. All of these factors are useful in determining the resource needs and probabilities of incident types within a community and provides metrics to evaluate emergency service capabilities”

The study dates back to 2023 when the City Council developed goals and sought bids to conduct a study looking at both the fire and police departments. The fire department’s portion of the study was released separately in February and the police department’s part is yet to come.

“The purpose of this document,” the Chief said, “is to review the City’s delivery of emergency services to ensure needs are being met and outline areas for improvement based on industry guidelines, standards and regulations. This project focuses on emergency services system delivery including response capabilities, response time analysis, resource locations, available resources, personnel capacity, staffing and workforce.”

Morro Bay operates a single station, full-service, paramedic fire department and as such its crews go through diverse training that includes becoming paramedics, and engineers trained in everything from fighting wildfires and

structure fires, running the engines, to medical aids, and technical rescues, including saving people who illegally climb Morro Rock and get stuck.

Because there is but one station, the normal response is for the four firefighters on duty to respond with two engines in case of a second call coming in, so they can directly respond to that emergency from the first one. According to the new industry standards, this is not adequate staffing, especially in the case of a big fire.

“The National Fire Protection Association [NFPA] Standard 1710,” the report said, “establishes a minimum ERF of 16 personnel to a single-family residential structure fire and an ERF of 17 personnel if an aerial apparatus [ladder truck] is utilized.

“A critical task analysis was performed for other incident types including technical rescues, hazardous materials incidents, medical responses, wildland urban interface fires, and other incident types to determine an ERF for each general incident type.”

The standards mean Morro Bay needs help from other agencies. “This report identifies the ERF needed for incidents Morro Bay Fire responds to varied between five personnel for a low-risk medical aid up to 28 personnel for an apartment building fire.”

Morro Bay is currently only able to staff four personnel daily, Chief McCrain’s report said, and five in the summer, tourist season, when seasonal firefighters are brought on.

“CAL FIRE,” the report said, “can provide an additional three response personnel for automatic aid during fire season and two personnel during the winter. Additional personnel can be provided through mutual aid support with a greater than 10-minute travel time to the City. Due to the distance from mutual aid partners, assembling an ERF that meets NFPA 1710 standards can exceed 40 minutes with the current staffing levels.”

The study looked at the staffing response times and logistics of the city, which is effectively bisected by Hwy 41 (Atascadero Road), concluding that they really need a second, staffed fire station. The Bonita Street Station is a remnant of the “Town of El Morro,” which is what North Morro Bay was called before incorporation in 1964, when the County governed the town.

Having two stations is not new, as the Fire Department has been trying to find a way to cut down response times to the north end of town for several decades. At one time the plan was to use a nearly 1-acre parcel given to the City when the Cloisters Subdivision was approved. That had been the planned site for a new fire station until the Harbor Street Station was condemned and then rebuilt. The City has since sold that parcel and it’s being planned for a small housing development.

Bonita Street appears to be the location for a second station.

Calls to North Morro Bay account for some 30% of all calls the department gets, the report said. The response must come from the Harbor Street Station and the drive time is about 6 minutes, given no traffic snarls.

“The NFPA 1710 standard is 4 minutes or less travel time 90% of the time,” Chief McCrain said. “The report identified that with the Bonita Street Fire Station staffed the entire MBFD response area would be within a 4-minute travel time greatly improving service to the northern half of the City. Staffing a second location in North Morro Bay also provides for continuity of service in the event of natural disasters and other incidents that prevent travel between the north and south portions of town.”

This issue with staffing has been around since at least 2003, when an Ad-hoc Committee formed by the City Council to evaluate the City’s emergency services, recommended the daily staffing of four, “with an optimal level of six daily as funding allows.” That last part is the big rub in all this, as the City has almost annually had to pinch pennies to balance its budget.

That committee report also concluded that the City’s intent was “to re-open and staff Fire Station 54 [Bonita Street], and direct staff to seek funding expeditiously.”

After that Council vote, the City was able to get money together to rebuild the apparatus bay at Bonita Street, which also has living quarters. Then the economy crashed.

“Due to the economic downturn in 2008 financial

constraints impacted this goal, construction of the living quarters was unable to proceed and progress to staff a second fire station was halted.”

Also during this time, the department got busier, responding to some 1,500 calls for service, 34% coming from North Morro Bay. Staffing was just nine fulltime firefighters, plus a fire chief, for a daily staffing level of just three. The department had a reserve firefighter program that had up to 20 people. But reserve firefighters, which many departments relied on, were required to undergo the same training as fulltime firefighters, which became both cost prohibitive, and self-defeating, in that such highly trained reserves often left for fulltime employment with other departments.

Armed with these staffing studies, a group of citizens formed Friends of the Fire Department and worked in 2006 to pass Measure Q, a half-cent sales tax hike to fund emergency services — police and fire — plus street and storm drain maintenance.

It was the million dollars or so a year from Measure Q that guaranteed a Federal loan used to rebuild the Harbor Street Fire Station, which had fallen into disrepair. The December 2003 San Simeon Earthquake damaged the Harbor Street Station’s apparatus bay and forced the department into temporary quarters across the street for several years, until the new station was built. Times have changed both for the fire department and the city.

“In the 20 years since this original Standards of Cover was concluded,” the Chief said, “the City has seen a dramatic increase in tourism, large public events such as the Ironman Triathlon, and a significant increase in traffic congestion that can result in hours long delays along the Embarcadero during holidays and public events. In an effort to reduce the effects of these challenges, the Morro Bay Fire Department has increased daily staffing to four full-time firefighters.” According to the City website, the department has 13 full-time firefighters (four captains), a fire marshal and fire chief, plus up to four seasonal firefighters and one office tech.

All these things considered, Chief McCrain’s report had several recommendations:



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HAVE A HAPPY 4TH OF JULY!

News

- Establish a community standard for services provided, response protocols, and benchmark objectives for the City’s fire protection services;
- Set a baseline standard for response time at 1 minute 30 seconds “for all emergency calls 90% of the time;”
- Work with dispatch and set up clocks in the fire station to better track response times, with regular reviews within the department;
- Set a 5-minute travel time benchmark for 90% of calls;
- Re-open and staff the Bonita Street Station to reduce response times to North Morro Bay;
- Increase staffing on engines to three from the current two, which means increas-

ing overall daily staffing from four to six; and,

- Establish the objective of a response force of 10 with a 12-minute travel time (utilizing mutual aid from CAL Fire).

The City Council was asked to receive this report and file it. Meanwhile, at the same meeting, the fire chief had another item to start getting the Bonita Street Station rebuilt and staffed (see related story page 1).

“Making these improvements,” the fire chief said, “needs to be a planned approach to enhancing service levels, improving firefighter safety and easing the City’s financial burden by implementing these goals incrementally as City funding allows.”

County Enacts New Fireworks Law

San Luis Obispo County has enacted a new fireworks ordinance designed to further protect the public from errant pyrotechnics potentially starting wildfires. Taking effect June 19, the ordinance is “In response to growing concerns over illegal fireworks use and the associated risks of fires and injuries,” reads a news release from the County Fire Department.



- The new law is intended to bolster enforcement, enhance public safety, and to protect community resources during the high-risk fire season.
- The ordinance includes:
- All unpermitted fireworks are prohibited in the county’s unincorporated areas: these include the communities of Oceano, Cayucos, Nipomo, Avila Beach, Shandon, Creston, and Santa Margarita. Individual fire protection districts have their own ordinances, but most have similar bans in place.
 - Sets a \$1,000 fine per violation “for any illegal fireworks activity.
 - Individuals who use or allow the use of illegal fireworks on their property, regardless of whether they personally ignite them, are liable.
 - Each discharge is a separate offense, meaning multiple fines can apply in one incident.
 - Parents or guardians are strictly liable for any fireworks violations committed by minors under their care.
 - Violators may also be charged for response costs, including firefighting, law enforcement, and medical response services.
 - Fireworks may be seized, and responsible parties may be billed for disposal.
 - Criminal penalties may also apply, including fines starting at \$2,000 for possession or use of dangerous (those not labeled “safe and sane”) fireworks, and felony charges for

Fireworks Law Continued on page 4

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Fireworks Law From page 3

possessing more than 500 pounds of fireworks.

- A formal appeals process is in place, but fines must be paid in advance.

The new ordinance covers most unincorporated areas of SLO County, including Oceano, where “safe and sane” fireworks had been allowed when the Oceano Community Services District provided fire protection.

With OCSD officially divesting from fire service at the beginning of this year — just as Cayucos did several years ago — the County is now responsible for fire protection in Oceano.

Enhanced enforcement efforts will be concentrated in specific high-priority areas, of which Cayucos certainly qualifies. Already in mid-June reports were being made of fireworks being shot off at all hours of the night in Cayucos.

For more information on the County Ordinance and safe celebration alternatives, see: www.slocounty.ca.gov/fireworks.

In the Estero Bay Area, Los Osos and Cayucos fall under the County’s new ordinance, with Cal Fire Sta. 15 in Los Osos issuing this warning: “Just a reminder that in Los Osos fireworks are illegal and violations will result in a misdemeanor citation with a fine of \$2,000,” posted on the Community Services District’s website.

In Morro Bay, they do allow certain types of fireworks, with restrictions. According to a flyer the fire department put out, “Safe and Sane Fireworks are allowed on private property in Morro Bay. NO [sic] Fireworks on public property such as our parking lots, parks and beaches. Fireworks that do not have our State’s Safe and Sane Seal on the device are illegal.

“Any use of illegal fireworks or misuse of Safe and Sane Fireworks will result in a citation and fine of \$1,000 even for first-time offenders.”

Also, given Morro Bay residents’ aversion to fireworks in general, evidenced by the City’s not having a public fireworks show now for about a decade, anyone shooting off fireworks on 4th of July, can probably expect to be reported by neighbors and get a visit from the police or fire officials.

And for those using Safe and Sane Fireworks, the MBFD has some safety tips to follow:

- Have an adult present at all times;
- Light one at a time, then move away quickly;
- Assign an adult “Shooter” to light your family’s fireworks;
- Keep others at a safe distance;
- Keep an extinguishing agent (garden hose, fire extinguisher or bucket of water) within 100 feet;
- Use only outdoors and on your private property, never inside a structure;
- Place fountains or other spark emitting fireworks upright on a concrete, asphalt or other hard, level surface; and,
- Douse spent fireworks into a bucket of water before discarding.

As for “Don’ts” you should never point fireworks at another person, so no bottle rocket wars; don’t shoot off fireworks from an elevated position like off ladders or stands; and never hold a lit firework in your hands.

And for those with boats, it is also illegal to shoot off

marine flares like a firework. Such devices are only to be used in true emergencies and if you do this, you could run afoul of the Coast Guard, which enforces federal maritime laws.

AG Mayoral
Candidate Charged

By Neil Farrell

A second local would-be politician has been indicted by the District Attorney for election fraud, and this one is looking in the face of at least eight felony charges.

On June 24, District Attorney Dan Dow’s office announced “charges against Gaea Edde Powell, 62, for voter registration fraud; filing a false declaration of candidacy; fraudulent voting; failure to file campaign finance reports; and for perjury by declaration. These crimes are alleged to have occurred during the 2022 and 2024 Arroyo Grande Mayoral Election cycles.”

Powell ran for Arroyo Grande Mayor in 2022, finishing second in a 3-way race and garnering 22.48% of the votes. She tried again for the mayor’s job in 2024 and finished second with 35.68% of the votes. Both times she lost to Mayor Caren Ray Russom.



Gaea Edde Powell, 62, who twice ran for Arroyo Grande Mayor, is being charged with suspicion of election fraud reportedly committed during both her runs for office in 2022 and 2024.

The D.A. alleges that back in July 2022, Powell “registered to vote at an address in the City of Arroyo Grande where she did not reside as required by law. Instead, she resided in a rural part of the county near Arroyo Grande that is located outside the City Limits and is not subject to the jurisdiction of the City of Arroyo Grande.”

That fake registration led to her pull papers to run for mayor, which dug the criminal hole deeper for her. Powell allegedly “falsely declaring under penalty of perjury the location of her residence; submitting false nomination papers; failing to file campaign finance reports as required by law; and voting in the November 8, 2022, election where she was not legally entitled to vote.”

Apparently thinking she done nothing wrong or perhaps gotten away with it, she reportedly repeated the alleged crimes 2-years later, during the last mayoral campaign in A.G.

In 2024, “the complaint further alleges that Ms. Powell voted in the March 5, 2024, [Primary] election where she was not legally entitled to vote; falsely declared under penalty of perjury the location of her residence; submitted false nomination papers; and voted in the November 5, 2024, election where she was not legally entitled to vote. Of the nine criminal charges filed, eight are felonies and one is a misdemeanor.”

The D.A. filed the charges and Powell was expected to

turn herself in to the court and would face arraignment after that. Potential penalties range from probation to County Jail time, the news release said.

This marks the second big election-related case that’s been filed by the D.A.’s so-called Public Integrity Unit, founded in 2015 with the mission to “hold elected officials, public employees, and candidates for office accountable to the rules and laws that govern them.”

In May, unsuccessful Dist. 3 Supervisor candidate, Michelle Morrow of Grover Beach, who had pled “No Contest” to charges very similar to those Powell faces, in connection with a failed write-in candidacy in the March 2024 Primary Election.

Morrow was a last-minute write-in candidate challenging Supervisor Dawn Ortiz-Legg, who until Morrow stepped up was running unopposed.

Morrow, 56, garnered some 860 votes and was never much of a challenged for the incumbent Ortiz-Legg.

She was essentially charged with registering to vote and trying to run in a Supervisor District where she did not live.

Originally, Morrow too was charged with suspicion of voter registration fraud and perjury, but those charges were dropped as part of the plea agreement.

Morrow was sentenced to 90-days in County Jail and 2-years of Probation, because she had no criminal history and “other factors unique to her situation.”

The D.A.’s Office faced some criticism for the prosecution, as Morrow was a conservative and Ortiz-Legg a liberal (Supervisor races are non-partisan), and the case arose during the height of the so-called “law fare” being waged against President Donald Trump, but the prosecutor in the case denied the suspicions.

“I want to make crystal clear,” said the Prosecutor, Dep. D.A. Ben Blumenthal, “Ms. Morrow was not prosecuted because of her political beliefs, or her platform. Ms. Morrow was prosecuted because she deliberately and repeatedly lied to the voters of San Luis Obispo County in an unlawful attempt to get elected to a position she knew she was not legally qualified to hold.”

Morrow lived in Dist. 4 but registered and tried to get elected fin Dist. 3.

Morrow’s and now Powell’s cases put a spotlight on County Clerk-Recorder Elena Cano, who runs the County’s elections.

“There is nothing my office takes more seriously than upholding the law and conducting local elections that adhere to California Elections Code,” Cano said at the time of Morrow’s arrest. “The subject of election security has become a hot topic in recent months and years, both nationally and here at home. I appreciate the passion community members have for transparency in the elections process, and I also appreciate that, when warranted, local law enforcement gets involved.”

Cano has also seen questions raised over her Election Office’s competency, which was questioned after Dist. 2 Bruce Gibson’s narrow win in November 2022 by just 13 votes. Supporters of the loser in that race, Atascadero’s Bruce Jones, demanded a recount but didn’t go through with it, when the County sought to charge them for the full costs of the recount.

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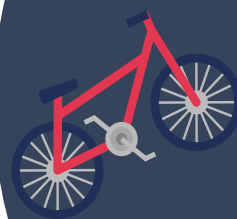
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Survey on Morro Bay Public Transit



Less than a month after management of Morro Bay’s transit system was handed over to a countywide agency, the City and Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) have started a poll to update a key planning document and possibly guide the system into the future.

RTA and the City “are conducting an online survey as part of the Short Range Transit Plan update,” reads a news release from the agencies. The survey is for those who use public transportation in town and for those who don’t.

“If you don’t use transit,” the release said, “they’d like to know why not and if there are changes that can be made so transit can work for you? If you use public transit, they want to know how they can make it a better experience.”

To take the survey in English, see: www.surveymonkey.com/r/MBTCommunitySurvey. And in Spanish, go to: www.surveymonkey.com/r/MBTEncuestadeLinea.

“Your opinion is important,” the release said, “to help improve public transit in Morro Bay. Don’t miss this opportunity to share your thoughts.”

If readers have questions, email Ari Keplinger at: Ari@lsctrans.com or call: (530) 583-4053.

City Seeks to Fill Planning Commission Seat

Want to dip a toe into the world of local politics? The City of Morro Bay has an opening on its most important advisory board.

The City is seeking applicants to fill one Planning Commission seat recently vacated by Asia King, who the community development director said was moving to Los Osos and thus unable to continue on the commission.

The five-member Commission reviews and approves planning department items such as various planning documents, and routine development permits. More complex issues such as Coastal Development Permits are reviewed by the Planning Commission and a recommendation passed on to the City Council.

The Council is the only body that can approve CPDs, with those subject to appeal to the California Coastal Commission.

Votes by the Planning Commission are all subject to appeal to the City Council. The City Council is the only elected, legislative body in Morro Bay with the authority to make law.

Advisory boards like the Planning Commission and most recently the Harbor Advisory Board — which has two past chairmen, Bill Luffee and Jeff Eckles, now on City Council — are gateways for many future city council people to become familiar to the residents, as each board’s meetings are broadcast on Charter Cable Ch. 20 and available on the Internet.

The deadline to apply for the seat is 5 p.m. Aug. 1. The City Council is expected to interview the candidates and select one person from the list. Whoever gets the seat will serve until Jan. 21, 2027, and would be eligible to re-apply for another term, though it’s likely to be with a different city council, whose roster could be expected to change with the 2026 election.

See: www.morrobayca.gov/832/Employment-Opportunities?gh_jid=4578235006 if interested in applying for this position.

Bakersfield Man Arrested on Drug, Firearm Charges



Morro Bay Police arrested a Bakersfield man on suspicion of being a convicted felon in possession of illegal drugs and firearms, following a June 25 traffic stop.

According to a press release at 10:17 p.m. officers stopped a suspicious vehicle at Marina Street and Morro Avenue, “for vehicle code violations and possible driver impairment due to the pattern of driving observed by the officer.”

The driver and sole occupant of the vehicle was identified as Sean Alexander Steele, 40, of Bakersfield. Police noticed something suspicious right away.

“Upon contact, a firearm was seen by the officer in plain view, below the steering column,” the news release

said. “Steele was removed from the vehicle and detained. A records check revealed Steele was a convicted felon who was prohibited from possessing a firearm or ammunition.”

Officers reportedly obtained Steele’s consent to search the vehicle and reportedly found “live pistol and rifle ammunition, large capacity rifle magazines with ammunition, a large amount of suspected fentanyl, and other items consistent with sales of narcotics. Additionally, burglary tools were also located inside of the vehicle.”

Steele was booked into County Jail on a slew of serious charges: allegedly being a felon in possession of a firearm; a felon in possession of ammunition; possession of a loaded firearm while transporting drugs; possession of a loaded firearm in a vehicle; sales/transportation of illegal drugs (fentanyl); possession of large capacity magazines loaded; possession of burglary tools; possession of drug paraphernalia; and possession of a switchblade knife.

Sheriff’s Detectives Seize Illegal Guns



Sheriff’s detectives confiscated a slew of guns from a Nipomo man who is also a convicted felon and unable to lawfully have guns.

Sheriff’s Detectives concluded a lengthy investigation in South County, serving a search warrant and seizing several illegal guns.

According to Sheriff’s spokesman, Tony Cipolla, SLO County Sheriff’s Detectives conducted the investigation into the activities of a suspicious Nipomo man, who is also a convicted felon.

At the conclusion of the investigation on June 12, Cipolla said, Detectives served a search warrant on the suspect’s home, in the 200 block of Chaparral Ln., Nipomo.

“The search warrant,” Cipolla said, “led to the seizure of six firearms, including two stolen firearms.”

In California, indeed most States in the Union, it is illegal for convicted felons to own any type of firearm.

The guns — four handguns of various makes and calibers, and one AR-style rifle — were confiscated and the case against Robert Ramirez, 42, was sent to the District Attorney’s Office for prosecution.

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Estero Bay News Briefs

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Poly Funds 17 Faculty Projects Through Grant Program

Cal Poly's Office of Research announced 17 awards for the 2025-26 Research, Scholarly and Creative Activities (RSCA) grant program cycle. Supported by funds from the California State University (CSU) Chancellor's Office and Cal Poly's Office of the Provost, the RSCA grant program supports faculty in contributing new knowledge through robust programs of scholarship focused on strengthening California's social, cultural and economic landscape. This program is one mechanism by which Cal Poly supports the Teacher-Scholar Model, in which faculty integrate teaching with research, scholarly and creative activities. This cycle, 73 proposals were received requesting a total of \$1,252,000. Using the criteria outlined in the RSCA Request for Proposals and guided by the review and rankings of the Academic Senate Grants Review Committee, more than \$289,000 in funds have been awarded to 17 projects. "The number and quality of RSCA applications continue to rise each year, demonstrating our faculty's commitment to advancing knowledge and engaging students in meaningful research," said Philip Costanzo, chair of the Grants Review Committee of the Cal Poly Academic Senate. "It's exciting to see these projects come to life and expand Cal Poly's research impact." Since its inception in 2014-15, the RSCA program at Cal Poly has provided over \$4 million in grants to faculty members.

More Trolley Times in Summertime

Summer is here and there are several upcoming changes to SLO Transit services that everyone should know. The SLO Transit summer bus schedule officially started and the Old SLO Trolley will run on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays starting on July 5. Friday and Saturday service runs from 12 p.m. to 8 p.m. through September 27. The Old SLO Trolley runs on a continuous 30-minute loop from downtown to the Upper Monterey business district and back. These changes reflect community feedback requesting more consistent service year-round "Summer is a great opportunity for community members to enjoy the liveliness of downtown, said Alex Fuchs, Mobility Services Business Manager. "Expanding Trolley service to Fridays and Saturdays gives people an opportunity to experience the development happening in the Upper Monterey Business District. It also gives tourists easy access to our downtown from many hotels in that area." This year, the summer bus schedule ends Sunday, August 31, allowing the academic schedule with its extended service hours to operate for a longer portion of the year. Riders can still expect hourly service on all routes, with earlier daily end times. The regular academic-year schedule, including extended evening service, will resume on September 1, 2025, to meet increased ridership. Riders are encouraged to plan ahead using the SLO Transit App or the web-based SLO Transit Rider Portal at <http://bit.ly/3GeY4BZ>, or pick up printed schedules at the Mobility Services Office, 1260 Chorro Street, Suite B.

More Phone Scams

The Sheriff's Office is warning residents of a phone scam in San Luis Obispo County that's targeting local residents. Recently, the Sheriff's has received four to five calls per day from individuals reporting that they were contacted by someone claiming to be from the Sheriff's Office. The caller often states there is a warrant for the person's arrest-commonly citing missed federal jury duty-and demands immediate payment to avoid arrest. "Scammers have been using the names of actual Sheriff's employees to make the calls appear legitimate," says a news report. "In many cases, victims are told to report to the Sheriff's Office to pay a fine, or they are threatened with arrest if they hang up. Payment is often demanded in the form of gift cards or other non-traceable methods." The Sheriff's Office reminds the public that it does not contact individuals by phone to demand money, payment for bail, or the resolution of warrants. "We will never ask for or accept money or gift cards as a form of payment for these matters," the report states. "Please help spread the word by informing family, friends, and neighbors-especially seniors and vulnerable individuals-so they are prepared in case they receive a similar call." Anyone who receives such a call should hang up immediately and report the incident to their local law enforcement agency. Send your news, community, and business briefs to EditorEBN@gmail.com. Be sure to include the who, what, why, where and when information along with a contact person.

Priest Arrested; Charged with Molesting Boys

The County Sheriff's Department arrested a Catholic Priest suspected of molesting three young boys in his charge, some three decades ago. According to Sheriff's spokesman, Tony Cipolla, on Nov. 8, 2024, "the Sheriff's Office received a report of child abuse which started occurring more than 30-years ago. Detectives in the Sheriff's Special Victims Unit began an immediate investigation." Detectives identified three male victims over the course of the investigation, Cipolla said. All three were members of the same family.



A San Diego man, Fr. Theodore Gabrielli, 61, was arrested for suspicion of child abuse in a case that reportedly started 30-years ago.

At the time, he said, the boys' family was living in Mexico, where they befriended a Catholic Priest, who became close with the family. Cipolla said the priest was allowed to take the three boys with him to many places in California, including his parent's residence in Los Osos. "It was there, the victims stated, the priest would sexually assault them," Cipolla said. "The assaults continued over the course of about eight years. The victims decided to come forward last year and report the abuse." On June 12, Cipolla said, Detectives arrested the priest, who was in Los Osos at the time. The suspect, identified as Fr. Theodore Edward Gabrielli, 61 of San Diego, has been charged with suspicion of aggravated sexual assault of a minor, Cipolla said. Gabrielli has been a Catholic Priest at churches, schools and ministries in San Jose, Los Gatos, and Los Angeles, Cipolla said. He added that the investigation is ongoing and anyone with information about this case or other potential victims is asked to contact the Sheriff's Detective Division at 805-781-4500. To remain anonymous, call Crime Stoppers at: 805-549 7867. Crime Stoppers also has a free mobile app for reporting crime tips, see: P3TIPS.COM or submit tips through the website at: www.slotips.org.

Driver Who Killed Boy Sentenced to Prison

An Atascadero man who pled guilty to a fatal hit-and-run impaired driving accident, has been sentenced to State Prison. The District Attorney's Office announced June 26 that Zachary Tomas Bernal, 32 of Atascadero was sentenced to seven years in State Prison, "for the crimes of vehicular manslaughter while impaired by drugs; hit and run resulting in death; and possession of fentanyl." The incident occurred this past March 15, "shortly before 3 p.m. when Bernal, while driving under the influence of fentanyl, drove onto the sidewalk striking and killing 11-year-old Jose," the news release said. Jose, whose last name was withheld, was "walking with



Zachary Bernal, 32, of Atascadero was sentenced to seven years in prison for a fatal DUI accident that killed an 11-year-old boy.

Sentenced Continued on page 9

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Police Blotter



- **June 15:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 7:30 p.m. at an undisclosed location in town. Logs indicated the driver was arrested for suspicion of swilled driving.
- **June 15:** Someone called police at 9:10 a.m. to report finding something of some unknown value lost by someone in the North Pit parking lot at Morro Creek. No word on what was found.
- **June 14:** Police responded at 11:26 a.m. to a report of felony grand theft. Logs didn't say what was stolen, who got ripped off nor whether they have any suspects, so you probably shouldn't bet on it.
- **June 14:** Police responded at 12:06 p.m. to a hit-n-split after some building apparently jumped in front of a car.
- **June 14:** Police responded at 9:49 a.m. to Legend's Tavern at the corner of Harbor and Main. Logs indicated the case was a felony grand theft, which is quite a bar tab to skip out on.
- **June 13:** Police responded at 1:20 p.m. to a reported burglary and petty theft by some apparent probationer. No word on the loss or where it happened, but the suspect was likely violated by police.
- **June 13:** At 12:16 p.m. someone said their identity was stolen, and we now have no idea who they are.
- **June 13:** Police contacted a suspicious subject at 10:04 a.m. at Tidelands Park on the Embarcadero. Logs indicated the derelict had a bench warrant and when they searched him or her, low and behold, they found suspected dope.
- **June 13:** Police responded at 8:43 a.m. to Tidelands Park after some apparent weapons grade moron fired a gun in a "grossly negligent manner."
- **June 13:** Police responded at 5:14 a.m. to Rite Aid Pharmacy on Quintana for a report of felony vandalism. The

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- loss was somewhere north of \$400, no doubt before the going out of business sale discount.
- **June 12:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 4 p.m. at an undisclosed location. Seems the owner hadn't given the DMV Snallygaster its annual pound of flesh in over 6 months.
 - **June 12:** Someone turned in something they found somewhere to some officer down at the police station.
 - **June 11:** Police responded at 7:15 p.m. to some kind of a disturbance involving violation of a stay-the-hell-away court order.
 - **June 11:** Police responded at 2:54 p.m. to yet another traffic collision and once again logs didn't say where it happened, as the apparent policy is that you don't deserve to know.
 - **June 11:** Police cited yet another suspicious vehicle with expired tags, as efforts continue to bridge the State's budget gap.
 - **June 11:** Police responded at 9:30 a.m. to a disturbance at the Morro Shores Inn & Suites on Atascadero Road. Logs indicated they encountered a scofflaw with a bench warrant. Upon searching the scoundrel, they allegedly discovered illegal drugs and paraphernalia. The apparent hype was also charged with allegedly resisting arrest, as he or she no doubt didn't take kindly to being roused.
 - **June 11:** Police responded at 7:54 a.m. to Del Mar Park where once again graffidiots had left their stain on public property.
 - **June 10:** Police were called at 6 p.m. for a report of someone annoying or molesting a child under 18, a misdemeanor disorderly conduct charge.
 - **June 10:** Police responded at 4:58 p.m. to a disturbance at Morro Rock. Logs indicated officers corralled some clocked out juice weasel ululating his or her head off. Logs indicated they threw in a resisting arrest charge for good measure.
 - **June 10:** Police towed away an offensive vehicle at 8:38 a.m. parked too long in one place.
 - **June 9:** Police responded at 9:58 p.m. to a report of a guest died at the Harbor House Inn on Main Street. The Coroner's Office was called.
 - **June 9:** At 2:49 p.m. at an undisclosed location in town, police cited some urban camper for alleged illegal camping in a public place, a violation of the town's sleeping-where-we-can't-collect-a-tax law.
 - **June 9:** Yet another credit card scammer was at work at some local business.
 - **June 9:** Police responded at 1:49 p.m. to a report of vandalism at Morro Elementary on Monterey.
 - **June 9:** At 1:17 p.m. police responded to another traffic collision at an undisclosed location. No gruesome details were given.
 - **June 9:** Police contacted another homeless person at 12:15 p.m. somewhere in town and cited the outdoorsman for suspicion of illegal camping.
 - **June 9:** At 9:23 a.m. police responded to another traffic crash. No details, basic or juicy, were given.
 - **June 9:** Police responded at 8:28 a.m. to an undisclosed location for a report of "touch person intimately against his or her will for sexual arousal," also known as fondling. No word on whether anyone arrested.
 - **June 8:** Police responded to a fight at 10 p.m. at the Galley Seafood Grill & Bar, not the normal place one expects such shenanigans. Logs indicated the case was a felony aggravated assault and second-degree robbery, but no indications of who zoomed who.
 - **June 7:** Police contacted some unnamed delinquent somewhere presumably in town, at 7 p.m. and were no doubt shocked, shocked I tell you, the dude had a bench warrant.
 - **June 7:** Police pulled over a suspicious vehicle somewhere in town sometime around 8 p.m. for the hanging offense of an expired registration, and a broken brake light.
 - **June 6:** At 1:11 p.m. police responded to a disturbance call at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated some louse was accused of abusing his spouse.
 - **June 6:** Police stopped a suspicious vehicle at 10:17 a.m. as the driver reportedly had a suspended license, the consequence of a prior driving drunk conviction. No arrest was made, as the driver was apparently heading to a bar not from it.
 - **June 5:** Police were called at 11:37 p.m. to a disturbance in City Park in the 700 block of Harbor. Logs indicated

- they contacted a soused fellow causing a ruckus, who of course had a bench warrant and was also discovered to allegedly possess illegal drugs, in this week's example of why they call it dope.
- **June 5:** Police responded at 4:56 p.m. to a reported assault at the Morro View Trailer Park, in the 400 block of Monterey. Logs indicated the case involved exhibiting a deadly weapon, not a firearm, and aggravated assault. No word on whether they arrested the fiend.
 - **June 5:** Police pulled over two suspicious vehicles at 11:12 and 11:39 a.m. presumably in the same location and cited the scofflaws for expired registrations, sentencing them to eternal damnation at the DMV.
 - **June 5:** Police responded to a domestic disturbance at an undisclosed location. Logs indicated they declared it a felony case of corporal punishment on a spouse or cohabitant.
 - **June 4:** Police responded at 10:07 p.m. to a reported traffic collision. Logs didn't indicate where this happened or whether anyone was injured, kinda important information to impart, ya' think?
 - **June 4:** At 7:40 p.m. police responded to somewhere on Morro Bay Boulevard to deal with a report of a mentally deranged individual. No word on whether he or she was detained.
 - **June 4:** Police responded at 4 p.m. to a reported petty theft at Under the Sea Gallery on the Embarcadero. No word on what booty got pinched.
 - **June 4:** Another car crash was reported, this time at 3 p.m. but still no location was given nor the extent of the carnage.
 - **June 4:** Police responded at 2 p.m. to the Giant Chessboard Park on the Embarcadero to check on a reported theft. Apparently, the king, said someone stole from the queen and they needed a knight to keep from becoming pawns in the chess game of life.
 - **June 4:** Police stopped another suspicious vehicle at 10:55 a.m. at yet another undisclosed location. Logs indicated the driver had a revoked license and he or she was cited and released, presumably on foot.
 - **June 4:** At 9:12 a.m. police responded to Albertson's Market on Quintana Road after someone reportedly used the help-yourself aisle.
 - **June 3:** Police responded at 4 p.m. to a reported case of vandalism at Taco Bell, as someone apparently dropped the Chalupa.
 - **June 2:** Police responded at 6:04 p.m. to McDonald's on Quintana Road for a reported theft. Logs listed four crimes — fraudulent use of an access card; using an access card without the owner's consent; unauthorized use of said access card; and, getting credit under false pretenses, an apparent case of someone being six fries short of a Happy Meal.
 - **June 2:** Police were called at 2:17 p.m. to Morro Rock after some apparent Good Samaritan found some undisclosed treasure and turned it over to police.

What the hell? You went out like that? In public?

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his friend, Orlando. Immediately before the collision, Jose exclaimed ‘mira’ [Spanish for look or look out]. Orlando was able to quickly move and avoided being struck.” Jose was struck by the car and died from his injuries.

Bernal fled the scene and soon abandoned his vehicle but was apprehended by Atascadero Police about 4½ hours later. Police found small amounts of fentanyl both in his vehicle and where he was caught, the release said. A field sobriety-drug test was performed on him when he was arrested and, “the evaluation results indicated he was under the influence of controlled substance(s). A forensic blood test was taken about eight hours after the fatal collision revealing a high level of fentanyl and a lesser level of methamphetamine in his blood. It is believed that Bernal used fentanyl prior to the collision and again used fentanyl and methamphetamine after the collision.”

When he was arraigned on May 21, Bernal pled guilty to all charges.

“Bernal pleaded guilty to all charges and enhancements on the criminal complaint,” the D.A.’s release said, “including vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated, hit and run resulting in death, and possession of fentanyl. Bernal admitted an additional allegation that he fled the scene after committing the crime of vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated. This admission subjected him to an additional five years of incarceration.

When he pled guilty, he didn’t ask for any special treatment or deal.

“Bernal entered his guilty pleas ‘open’ to the court without any agreement on what his sentence would be,” the news release said. Based on the crimes he pled guilty to, Bernal faced a maximum sentence of nine years.”

At the sentencing hearing, after testimony from the boy’s parents and aunt about how devastating Jose’s loss was to their family, Bernal took full responsibility and expressed “extreme remorse for what he did.”

Assistant D.A. Eric Dobroth, who prosecuted the case, said, “Our hearts are with Jose’s family, friends, and rest of the affected community. This is a terrible, yet completely avoidable tragedy. As this incident so heartbreakingly illustrates, driving while impaired puts every life on the roadway in peril.”

Dobroth said they understand why some might find

the seven-year sentence too lenient. “We are mindful that the law provides a sentence that seems wholly inadequate for Bernal’s conduct,” Dobroth said, “that resulted in the loss of a precious child but are hopeful that completion of the criminal case will provide family and friends with the space necessary to begin the long process of healing.”

The A.D.A. repeated an oft-heard refrain. “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 Atascadero Police Department, with the assistance of the D.A.’s Bureau of Investigation and was prosecuted by A.D.A. Dobroth. Victim Advocate Gabriela Puga provided assistance to the family and victims in the case.

Two Teens Stabbed in Cambria

Two teenage boys were stabbed in Cambria and two men were arrested in connection to the incident.

On June 29, at approximately 9 p.m., the San Luis Obispo County Sheriff’s Office responded to a report of that two male juveniles were had been stabbed in the 2200 block of Main Street in Cambria.

Deputies arrived on scene, assisted with medical aid, and quickly obtained a description of the vehicle the suspects had fled in, according to a Sheriff’s Office news release. A short time later, deputies with assistance from the California Highway Patrol located and stopped the suspect vehicle on Highway 46 at Hidden Valley Road in Templeton. Two adult males were detained without incident.

The suspects were identified as 32-year-old Miguel Angel Cervantes, of Delano, California, who was arrested on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon, and 33-year-old Jose Munoz, also of Delano, who was arrested for suspicion of being an accessory.

Teens Stabbed Continued on page 21

Community

SLO Symphony Taking Young Conductor Nominees



The San Luis Obispo Symphony is on the lookout for a young star to take center stage as Guest Conductor for a Day at this summer’s premier musical event, “Pops by the Sea: Hollywood Hits,” on Saturday, Aug. 30 at the Avila Beach Golf Course.

Members of the public are invited to nominate a young music lover between the ages of 13 and 23 for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to lead the symphony in front of a live audience!

The winner will get to conduct the symphony in a rousing rendition of a Hollywood classic.

Nominations must be submitted by August 1 at <http://bit.ly/44gCiHn>.

“Inviting a young person to step onto the podium as our guest conductor is a powerful way to celebrate the next generation of artists and music lovers,” SLO Symphony Music Director Andrew Sewell said. “It’s a reminder that music, like the film scores we’re performing, has the power to inspire people of all ages.”

The concert will feature fan-favorite music from iconic films, TV shows, and video games, including “Casablanca,” “Pirates of the Caribbean,” “Harry Potter” and more.

Conductor Continued on page 10



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Community

Events and Activities

By Theresa-Marie Wilson

The 2026 Morro Bay Bird Festival (MBBF) is accepting submissions for a standout bird art piece (no photos) to be featured on the official festival clothing worn by hundreds of attendees, volunteers, and staff.

The art must depict one or more birds of special interest to birders that are commonly seen in San Luis Obispo County in winter. The bird(s) also must be realistic in key features and behavior — even if your style is somewhat abstract. Moreover, the design must look superb when printed on clothing.

If your work is selected, you will receive a free vendor's table (\$200 value) at the Festival's Marketplace (Jan 16 - 18), a festival shirt with your winning design, and widespread recognition of you and your art. To submit up to two pieces and for more information, go to: <https://form.jotform.com/251676068769171> or <https://morrobaybird-festival.org/>. Due date: Aug. 1.



Join other seniors in SLO Hikers on Thursdays, July 10 and 24 and August 14 and 28 from 8:30. – 10:30 a.m. If you're looking to enrich your senior years with invigorating walks and the camaraderie of fellow outdoor enthusiasts, consider joining the SLO Hikers program. This program is great for exploring the scenic environments of San Luis

Obispo City and County. Tailored specifically for individuals aged 55 and older, SLO Hikers offers a wonderful avenue for healthy exercise, meeting new friends, or making new connections.

To learn more about this exciting venture, reach out to Kacy LeSage at klesage@slocity.org.

The SLO Rec Department presents Science-Dipity Bubble-ology Camp Monday – Friday, July 21 – 25 from 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. at ASPIRE Church, 1775 Calle Joaquin in SLO.

Youth will not just study soap, but will conduct exciting experiments with air and water, too. They'll also design and construct artifacts to show and teach friends and family about bubbles: cubic-bubble frame, model lung, air cannon, giant-bubble maker, hole-in-a-bubble, "the bubbler", and the "soap boat."

For more information, go to sloreactivities.org. Attendees must be 6 – 10 years of age.



Buddhist Boot Camp in Los Osos takes place Sun, July 13, from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. at Morro shores Mobile Home Park, 595 Binscarth Rd, Los Osos.

We meet on the second Sunday of each month. Join us with Timber Hawkeye, bestselling author of "Buddhist Boot Camp," "Faithfully Religionless," and "The Opposite of Namaste" for a free discussion and Q&A about the benefits of mindfully living at peace with the world (both within and around us). This is a circle discussion, free for all, and everyone is welcome. We start at 10:30am with a couple of minutes of silent meditation and then have an open discussion about a different topic each month.

There's plenty of free parking available at any designated parking space (or outside on Ramona), but no pets are allowed in the Club House.

For more information about Timber and the books, go to BuddhistBootCamp.com.

The time has come for Central Coast State Parks Association's (CCSPA) 6th Annual Butterfly Ball taking place

on Sept. 27, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Octagon Barn, 4400 Octagon Way in San Luis Obispo.

Join an evening of music, food & drink, inspiring presentations, and silent auction to support the 10 state parks in San Luis Obispo. This year's theme, Moonlit Wings, and Wild Things, honors the park's ecosystems and wildlife that comes to life at night — owls, bats, moths, and more — that depend on dark skies. Guests are encouraged to come dressed in whimsical, night-sky-inspired attire — channel the moon, the stars, the shimmer of wings, and the magic of the wild. The evening includes music, dance performances, dinner by Popolo, bear and wine, awards and presentations as well as a silent auction. Early Bird pricing for tickets runs through Aug. 1 and are \$125.00 - \$160.00 at My805Tix.com.



Central Coast Theatre Company Presents Shrek the Musical at the Clark Center in Arroyo Grande on Thursday, July 10 – 7 p.m., Friday, July 11 at 7 p.m. and Saturday, July 12 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Get ready for a hilarious, high-energy adventure as Central Coast Theatre Company presents Shrek the Musical! Based on the Oscar-winning DreamWorks film, this crowd-pleasing Broadway hit tells the story of Shrek, an unlikely hero who sets out on a quest to rescue Princess Fiona. Along the way, he's joined by a fast-talking Donkey, faces off with a tiny villain named Lord Farquaad, and meets a cast of quirky fairy tale creatures who have been banished from their homes. As Shrek discovers the power of friendship and the true meaning of inner beauty, audiences will be swept up in a story full of heart, humor, and unforgettable music. With catchy songs, energetic choreography,

Conductor From page 9

Nominations may include their leadership qualities, personal character, community involvement, musical background or experience, dedication to the arts, or why this opportunity would be meaningful to them.

To purchase tickets, visit slosymphony.org. Avila Beach Golf Course is located at 6464 Ana Bay Road in Avila Beach.



FIRE-SAFE HOME & GARDEN TOUR

SUNDAY, JULY 27th 12-4pm

Explore home hardening & fire-resistant landscaping techniques



Join us 7/27, 12pm-4pm for an informative tour of 4 Los Osos homes showcasing fire-scaping, home hardening, and creating defensible spaces. Discover how to incorporate beautiful fire-resistant plants into your garden while ensuring safety and sustainability in California's changing climate. Addresses provided to all ticket holders by 7/26. LOVGC Membership is \$25 for an individual and \$35 for a family.

Tickets are \$25 each or 2 for \$40.
\$10 for LOVGC members.

Tickets and details at www.lovgardenclub.org



Summer Challenge!

Sign-up this July and earn a FREE Month* when you workout 12 out of your first 30 days!

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Community

and a talented local cast, Shrek the Musical is the perfect night out for the whole family. Come share the magic and join us at the Clark Center for this one-of-a-kind theatrical experience.

Tickets range from \$17 to \$28.50 and are available at clarkcenter.org.

Free programs at the Los Osos Library, 2075 Palisades Ave., 805-528-1862. All libraries are closed July 4. Current Featured Wall Artists: Patrick Logan paintings.

- The Summer Reading Program has started! Pick up your booklet and read for fun prizes
- **Paws to Read** – Wednesdays, 3:15 – 4:15 p.m. Come and read your favorite book to Berkeley! She’s at the Los Osos Library on Wednesday afternoons. For school age.
 - **Storytime** - Thursdays, 10:30 a.m. – 11a.m. Stories, dance, and music for toddlers and preschool-ers.
 - **TMHA Van** – Fridays, 1– 2:30 p.m. Transitions Mental Health Association provide services, referrals, supplies to unhoused individuals.
 - **Bears Book Club** – Tuesday, July 8, 6 – 7:30 p.m. “Nothing to Envy,” by Barbara Demick. Drop in. Adults.
 - **Star Wars Party** – Friday, July 11, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m. May the force be with you at the library this summer! Join us for an afternoon of trivia, crafts, games and more. Star Wars costumes and T-shirts are encouraged! Be there or be a stuck-up, half-witted, scruffy-looking nerf-herder.
 - **Messy Art** – Saturday, July 12, 10 – 11 a.m. Encourage your child to get creative through painting and other messy art processes! Leave the clean-up to us. All materials will be provided. Wear clothes that can get messy! For ages 6 months and up.
 - **Teens: Books, Beverages, and Board Games** – Saturday, July 12, 3 – 4 p.m. Come get hopped up on a beverage of your choosing (boba? matcha? hot tea?)! Revamp your personal library

- by bringing books to swap for something new to read! Sit down for a fun (or ruthlessly chaotic) board game!
- **Let’s Talk!** – Wednesday, July 16, 6 – 7 p.m. Join us for a TED Talk viewing followed by discussion. This month – Arthur Benjamin: A performance of “Mathemagic.” Adults.
 - **Cartooning with Kane Lynch** – Friday, July 18, 3 – 4:30 p.m. Join cartoonist Kane Lynch (and P-nut the Cartoon Cat) for a comic-making adventure! For ages 10 to 18.



Reggae Legends The Meditations play the Siren in Morro Bay, 900 Main St., on July 17 from 7 to 10 p.m. Known the world over as Jamaica’s legendary harmony trio, The Meditations captured the hearts of reggae fans around the world. This led to collaborations with Lee Scratch Perry. Scratch, who produced for Bob Marley and the Wailers, asked them to do backup vocals for Punky Reggae Party, featuring Bob on lead vocals. Bob Marley was so pleased with their harmony that he went in search for the group to do more backup vocals for him. The Meditations harmonic vocals can also be heard on “Bongo Man,” by Jimmy Cliff and “Mr. Cop” by Gregory Isaacs. Tickets are \$20 and are available at thesirenmorrobay.com.



The Reboot Speak Easy returns with two great storytelling shows this summer at The Red Barn in Los Osos Community Park (w/ seating for 100). Featuring renowned storytellers Michael Kaplan, Jean Moelter, Jill Turnbow and Colleen Craig and introducing new voices to The Reboot stage!

On Fri. July 11 the theme is Unconventional Methods - True personal stories about taking risks and going rogue.

On Fri. Aug. 15 the theme is Mending Fences - Stories of break downs, make-ups, do-overs and forgiveness. Plus, Michael, Jean, Jill and Colleen reprise their Greatest Hits.

Doors open 6:30 p.m. and the show starts at 7 p.m. The events are free, but donations are welcome. Light snacks and drinks will be available but feel free to bring your own favorites, too. For more info, contact host and storyteller Rocky Ross at the.reboot4u@gmail.com, or facebook.com/the.reboot4u.

- Upcoming free youth programs at the Morro Bay Library - 625 Harbor St, (805) 772-6394.
- **Sensory Playtime** - Saturday, July 5, 10 – 11 a.m. Let your little ones lead the way in this open-ended playtime! Babies and toddlers can use their senses to explore our play stations. Parents & caregivers: we also have early literacy tips for you! For ages under 5.
 - **Reptile Ron Animal Show** - Wednesday, July 9, 3 – 4 p.m. Meet Reptile Ron and all his animal friends. All ages.

Send your event listing at least three weeks in advance to EditorEBN@gmail.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.

What do you think of transit in Morro Bay?

Morro Bay Transit and the San Luis Obispo Regional Transit Authority (RTA) are conducting an online survey. If you don't use transit, we'd like to know why not and if there are changes we can make so transit can work for you. If you use public transit, we want to know how we can make it a better experience.

The online survey will close July 31st

Your opinion is important to us. Use your smartphone to scan the QR code or visit:



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MBTCommunitySurvey>

Don't miss the opportunity to share your thoughts!



Questions? Contact Ari Keplinger Ari@lsctrans.com 530-583-4053





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Community
Fourth of July Events
Locally and Beyond

By Neil Farrell and Theresa-Marie Wilson
July 4th is the first big weekend of the summer for the areas in SLO County and falls on Friday this year. While there are a ton of fun activities planned, public fireworks shows are limited.

Arroyo Grande
The annual Concerts in the Park takes place July 4th from 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Heritage Square Park, 1221 Ash St. There will be a flag presentation and the National Anthem. The Village Band performs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., followed by Unfinished Business from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Food, drinks, beer and wine are available for purchase. Free to attend.

Atascadero
The Atascadero 4th of July Music Festival takes place Friday, July 4 from 3 – 8 p.m. and is hosted by the Atascadero Printery Foundation. This year's features a dynamic lineup including Hot Buttered Rum, Jordan Bush & The Packrats, and The Doohickeys at Atascadero Lake Park, 9305 Pismo Ave. Enjoy wine tasting and refreshing drinks for purchase. Stay for a special light show finale. No outside food or beverages allowed. Tickets are \$25 pre-sale | \$30 at the gate for adults, and kids under 18 are free. They are available at my805tix.com.

Avila Beach
Start your holiday celebration off with a delicious pancake breakfast with your pups in the garden of the Avila Beach Community Center from 8:30-11 a.m. At 11, head to the Avila Beach Promenade for the annual Doggie Parade that runs until noon. All dogs must be registered to walk in the parade. For more info visit slochamber.org.

Cayucos
The Cayucos Chamber of Commerce and Lion's Club, work together every year to put on an all-day celebration with lots of great fun activities, starting at the break of dawn with the Annual Sand Sculpture Contest on Cayucos Beach. If you'd like to get some dirt under your fingernails and play in the sand, you'll have to arrive at 4 a.m. for signups on the beach. Bring your own tools to make your temporary master works. Prizes awarded for the best adult and kid sand sculptures. The Sand Sculpture



The Cayucos Chamber and Lion's Club have organized a banging good time for the 4th. Photo submitted

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Contest ends at 8 a.m.; in time for the Annual Lion's Club Independence Day Parade on Ocean Avenue, which starts at 10 a.m. The parade usually features over 40 floats and entries, with some 25,000 people lining parade route, which ends on Cayucos Drive. Arrive early and bring a folding chair to sit on. For those wanting to stake out a prime viewing spot, rules don't allow you to pre-position a chair on the street nor to block sidewalks. According to organizers, any chairs left in the street or parking spaces overnight could be confiscated. At 10 a.m. the Front Street Fair opens with food and arts & crafts vendors lining Front Street overlooking the beach. The fair runs from 10 to 6 p.m. There will also be a Lion's Club tri-tip barbecue to raise money for next year's fireworks show from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Veterans Hall. At dusk (about 9 p.m.) a public fireworks show will be shot off the pier. Get to the beach early to pick out a spot for the show. The organizers have issued a word of caution to folks

coming in for the 4th of July: "If you're visiting Cayucos on the 4th, do your part to keep illegal fireworks away, park only in legal spots, pack out your trash, respect everyone's safe space and celebrate responsibly." Cambria
Cambria will not have a fireworks show again this year after storms severely eroded away the platform where they used to set up the fireworks at Shamel Park. The fireworks show was also canceled last year but organizers said they are looking for a new spot to launch the fireworks in 2026. That's expected to be an exceptionally big year as it will mark the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The local American Legion Post will host a family fun day and picnic at Shamel Park. There will be lots of fun activities, live music and a barbecue. A Pilates class takes place at 9 a.m. on the dance floor. Other events, face painting, merchandise, bounce house, ice cream, waiter and waitress races, food and live music, run from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and are free to attend. A park cleanup day takes place at July 5 starting at 9 a.m.

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Community

Morro Bay

Morro Bay will not have fireworks again this year, but the Recreation Department is holding the Annual Family Fun Day at Tidelands Park.

Festivities start early with the return of the Morro Bay Mile Skateboard Push, a skateboarding race that starts at Morro Bay High School. Organized by Skateboard Hall of Famer, Jack Smith, signups start at 9 a.m. at MBHS' west entrance and the race kicks off at 10.

The race is for skaters of all ages. Bring safety gear — helmets, kneepads, etc. — and your board. Push down Atascadero Road, over the Morro Creek Bridge and up the Embarcadero. Prizes go to: Best Man, Boy, Woman and Girl, and the Oldest, Youngest Skaters and for Best Costume.

At 11 a.m. is the Annual Red, White & Blue Bike Parade, starting at the North Pit parking lot (at the Morro Creek Bridge) and parading up the Embarcadero to Tidelands Park.

Dress in patriotic garb and decorate your bike in red, white, & blue to celebrate Independence Day. Free.

At Tidelands Park on the north end of the Embarcadero, the City Recreation Department's Family Fun Day starts with live music at 11 a.m. with Rosewood & Honey, with a noontime Flag Ceremony led by the Coast Guard Station Morro Bay.

The day will have fun games, contests, a kids' carnival and bounce house (\$5 carnival wristbands available). Bring a low back chair or a blanket to sit on the grass.

There will be lots of food and drinks, and a beer garden with 3 Stacks & a Rock Brewery for those over 21. At 1 p.m. The Michael Arriola Project takes the stage and will play until 4 p.m.

The party is over around 4 p.m.

Art in Park

The July 4th edition of Art in the Park will take over Morro Bay City Park on Friday-Sunday, July 4-6. Sponsored by Morro Bay Art Association, Art in the Park is a gathering of artists of varying genres, coming together to

July Events Continued on page 22



HISTORICAL SOCIETY of MORRO BAY

Once used as a tie-up for fishing vessels, a source of foundational stone, a mariner's locator, and an enduring sacred place of the Chumash and Salinan peoples, Morro Rock – stately and majestic – is the darling of the photographer's lens and the painter's brush. The Rock has survived a history that almost matches its many visual angles.

Morro Rock is the northernmost of the Nine Sisters, a group of peaks that are volcanic in origin. Morro Rock was once an island reachable on foot at low tide. It was connected to land in the 1930's by a causeway on the north end of the Rock, originally built to accommodate railroad tracks so that rail cars could haul the quarried rock more easily to shore.

The shape of the Rock, probably named Morro from the Spanish word 'moro' for the hat worn by a Moor, has changed in recent times, mostly by man-made influences. Massive amounts of Morro Rock have been blasted (as shown in the photo), quarried, and removed. Its fate as a source of mined rock was determined in an 1890 State Mining Bureau Report, which describes the Rock as "... a gigantic cone of porphyritic trachyte in the ocean off Morro Bay... [made of] available building stone, [which] although very hard chiseling, can be quarried in as large dimensions as can be handled."

From 1889 to 1963, 1,200,000 tons were taken from its mass through such quarrying. The rock was used to construct several structures in the county, including the



breakwater at the Port of San Luis and the Morro Rock causeway. Although the rock was once thought to be very strong and durable, both these structures were later rebuilt because the strength of the original material was not adequate.

Morro Rock was under the jurisdiction of the Army Corps of Engineers during the height of the rock-quarrying period. But public pressure continued to grow, especially as Morro Bay became a popular tourist destination, to stop the quarrying of Morro Rock. It finally gained protection from further human-induced alteration in 1966 when the title to it was transferred to the State of California. In 1968, our "Gibraltar of the Pacific" was officially named California Registered Historical Landmark No. 821.

Also in 1968, 5,000 tons of rock fell from its south facade. The rumble was heard at the Coast Guard station. The giant fallen boulders lie in place near Morro Rock to this day. It is possible that the parts that fell had been rendered unsteady by the quarrying. What will Morro Rock's future be?

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Takin' Care of BUSINESS

By Theresa- Marie Wilson

Festival of Flavor in Los Osos and Baywood

LOS OSOS/BAYWOOD PARK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Festival of FLAVOR!

2025

The Los Osos/Baywood Park Chamber of Commerce Festival of Flavor runs to Aug. 15.

Once again, the Chamber supports local eateries with a Festival of Flavor Passport that includes free items or discounts on orders from 20 participants. This year's Passports offer more than \$100 in value, but are priced at only \$40, or two for \$75. You can purchase Passports online, and they will be mail directly to you, or pick them up in person at Brightside Pizza,

For more information or to purchase passports, go to

Takin' Care of Business Continued on page 14

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Community

Bookshelf From page 13
lobpchamber.org. The Chamber’s July Mixer is at Los Osos Valley Memorial Park on July 16 at 5:30 p.m.

Pontoon Saloon Cruises the Bay



The Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting at Morro Bay Landing to celebrate the re-branding of their pontoon boat — now officially the Pontoon Saloon (formerly Captain Stew’s Bay Cruise). In addition to bay cruises aboard the newly named Pontoon Saloon, Morro Bay Landing, 1215 Embarcadero, Suite “A,” offers sportfishing, whale watching, private charters, sunset cruises as well as Hobie Kayak and Hobie SUP sales. For more information, check out morrobaylanding.com or give them a call at (805) 771-5500. Pictured in the center of the pontoon are boat captain Tabby Stambach, captain of the boat, owner Wade Gavin (center); and his wife Annie Selders (on right).

SLO Chamber Looking for New CEO

The San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce is launching a nationwide search to find a successor for CEO Jim Dantona, who has announced his candidacy to run for a seat on the SLO County Board of Supervisors. “The Chamber has always encouraged community members to run for office, as this sort of civic engagement is essential to our democracy and thriving community,” said June McIvor, chair of the SLO Chamber Board of Directors. “Jim has encouraged many people with business backgrounds to run for office throughout his time with the Chamber, and now he is walking the talk.” Dantona has agreed to continue as CEO through the

end of the year, which will mark a seven-year tenure at the helm of the organization. “The Board is working hard to make sure this transition is as smooth as possible, and I’m here to support them every step of the way,” Dantona said. “The Chamber has a great team of staff and volunteers, and I know I’m leaving the organization in great hands” The SLO Chamber Board of Directors and Dantona have agreed to a formal transition plan outlining the work that Dantona will continue to do, while also limiting much of his public advocacy work to other Chamber staff members so that there is no conflict with Chamber policies. “As CEO, Jim has done excellent work over the last six and a half years,” said McIvor. “Notable highlights include leading the Chamber through the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery, providing exceptional advocacy for the interests of our business community at city, county and statewide levels, cultivating a strong Chamber team and ensuring the Chamber’s financial stability.” The Board is in the process of forming a search committee to identify Dantona’s successor as CEO, with the goal of completing the search by year’s end. Hillary Trout, CFO at iFixit and previous SLO Chamber Board Member of four years and Board Chair in 2020, will chair this search committee. The Chamber will announce more about the CEO search in the coming weeks. For more information, reach out to Hollie at hollie@slochamber.org or (805) 786-2777.

Cal Poly Campus Dining Receives Four Awards

Cal Poly Campus Dining was a four-time winner at the National Association of College and University Food Services’ 2025 Loyal E. Horton Dining awards. Cal Poly earned four NACUFS awards earlier in June, including gold for Innovative Dining Program of the Year and Outreach and Education Program of the year, silver for Renovation of the Year and an honorable mention for Residential Special Event of the Year. These results showcase the enormous strides taken in modernizing the brand in recent years, as well as behind-the-scenes innovation and dedication to make Cal Poly Campus Dining one of the premier dining programs in the country. “We are thrilled to be recognized for a decade-long effort to substantially improve the Campus Dining program at Cal Poly,” said Andrea Burns, Cal Poly Partners’ associate executive director of Commercial Services, in a news release. “The outcomes recognized by NACUFS are a result of significant financial investments combined with a best-in-class team that works every day to improve the lives of our students.”

For the Innovative Dining Program of the Year entry, the gold award encompassed Cal Poly Campus Dining as a whole. This included its more than 40 unique dining platforms, mobile food trucks, concessions and catering operations, as well as the 800 employees who help it run. The program provides a blend of local favorites such as Jewel of India and Sequel Tea and national brands like Chick-fil-A, Starbucks, Panda Express and Einstein Bros. Bagels. Additional features — such as a dedicated on-site registered dietitian, an award-winning sustainability program and consistent community outreach endeavors — set the program apart. The second gold award, Outreach and Education Program of the Year, centered around the on-campus Self-Care Fair that Campus Dining hosted last December to create a space for students to relax and de-stress during final-exams week. Participants were invited to unwind with massage therapists, enjoy food and beverages, and engage in interactive activities such as candle painting, a tea-making station and more. “We’re honored to receive national recognition from NACUFS for our innovation, education and commitment to an exceptional dining experience,” said Russell Monteath, director of Commercial Services for Cal Poly Partners. “These awards reflect the creativity and dedication of the entire Campus Dining team, all in service of elevating the experience for Cal Poly students, faculty and staff — with students always at the heart of what we do.”

Cal Poly Campus Dining also received silver in the Renovation of the Year category showcasing the reopening of Cal Poly’s longest-operating food service facility following its \$40 million renovation. The revamped facility, located off the University Union Plaza, revitalized the hub of campus and provided students a central place to gather while creating a sense of community and enjoying a wide range of unique and customizable culinary offerings. Lastly, NACUFS recognized Cal Poly in the Residential Special Event of the Year category with an honorable mention for its inaugural Dining After Dining Student Associate Appreciation Party, honoring hundreds of student associates for their hard work throughout the year with an end-of-the-year evening of games, food, raffle prizes and trivia. “Campus dining professionals often work behind the scenes, yet their impact is profound,” said NACUFS President and CEO Robert Nelson. “Through these award submissions, we see how food becomes a force for education, well-being, progress and community. From culturally enriching programs to human-centered design and pioneering approaches to nutrition, these initiatives reflect the power of dining to shape the student experience. We’re proud to recognize and share the inspiring work of teams who go above and beyond in service to their campus communities.”

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Community
AmeriCorps to Stay
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California Attorney General Rob Bonta recently secured a decision by the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland largely blocking the Trump Administration from dismantling AmeriCorps while multistate litigation proceeds. AmeriCorps is an independent federal agency tasked with engaging Americans in meaningful community-based service that directly addresses the country's educational, public safety, and environmental needs. "For more than three decades AmeriCorps has given service minded Americans the opportunity to roll up their sleeves and volunteer in their communities around the country, A.G. Bonta said in a video on YouTube. "Opportunities to build affordable housing, clean up our neighborhoods, connect veterans and seniors with essential services, and rebuild communities after disasters." In February 2025, the Trump Administration issued an executive order directing every federal agency to plan to reduce their workforce and scale back their functions. AmeriCorps subsequently shuttered its National Civilian Community Corps program and placed at least 85% of its permanent workforce on administrative leave, notifying these employees that they would be terminated effective June 24, 2025. And at the end of April, California received notice from the federal government that its AmeriCorps grant programs had been terminated. A.G. Bonta, along with the attorneys general of Maryland, Delaware, and Colorado, led a coalition of 23 attorneys general and two states in suing to stop the dismantling of the agency. The District Court's order grants the states' request to restore AmeriCorps programs, including the volunteer servicemembers who support them, in California and in the other plaintiff states and reverse the shuttering of the National Civilian Community Corps program, while denying preliminary relief to address the layoff of AmeriCorps' permanent staff. "AmeriCorps volunteers represent the best parts of America," A.G. Bonta said in a news release. "They are selfless and eager to serve their country - but the reality is, many of them wouldn't be able to do so without the programs supported by AmeriCorps. Today's decision ensures this vital service work that brings volunteers directly into California communities will continue while we make our case in court. We will not stop fighting until we secure

a permanent decision protecting AmeriCorps and the thousands of hardworking volunteers who have dedicated themselves to public service." In 2024, more than 6,150 California members served at least 1,200 locations, including schools, food banks, homeless shelters, health clinics, youth centers, veterans' facilities, and other nonprofit and faith-based organizations. AmeriCorps invested more than \$133 million in federal funding to California that same year to support cost-effective community solutions, working with local partners on the ground to help communities tackle their tough challenges. 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 EditorEBN@gmail.com.

Hard Days Night
Coming to Morro Bay



The Beatles' classic rock-n-roll movie, "A Hard Day's Night," is the next special benefit screening for Morro Bay's community radio station, 93.7 FM The Rock. Set for 6 p.m., Monday, July 21 at the Bay Theater, tickets for the show are \$15 a person and available in advance online at: TheRockCommunityRadio.org, my805tix.com, and at the door. Seating is limited, so buy tickets early. Widely regarded as one of the greatest and most influential musical films of all time, "A Hard Day's Night" captures The Beatles at the height of "Beatlemania." Directed by Richard Lester, the film follows John, Paul, George, and Ringo through a fictionalized day in their lives, filled with humor, charm, and timeless songs, including the title track, "And I Love Her," "I Should Have Known Better," and more. The Rock founder, Hal Abrams said, "We are incredibly excited to bring this cinematic masterpiece back to

the big screen for such a worthy cause. The Beatles' music transcends generations, and this film is a joyous celebration of their impact. We believe it's the perfect way to bring the community together while supporting The Rock." The evening includes a '60s costume contest, a raffle, beer from Firestone Walker, and local wines for purchase (for those 21+). This is the latest special screening benefitting The Rock. Previous movies include "The Big Lebowski," "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" and "Pulp Fiction." The fundraising events help support freeform radio on the Central Coast. The Rock Community Radio, 97.3/107.9 FM, is a non-profit organization operated and supported by listeners and residents of San Luis Obispo County. The Rock connects the Central Coast with all volunteer, hyper-local, engaging, creative, community-based FM radio and online programming. They also provide public safety programming, emergency preparedness education, and emergency alert announcements for the cities of Paso Robles, Templeton, Atascadero, Morro Bay, Los Osos, and Cayucos. The Bay Theater is located at 464 Morro Bay Blvd. Doors open at 5 and the show starts at 6.

By the Sea Productions
'2 Across'



Daniel Freeman and Lisa Woske compare crossword puzzle techniques in "2 Across," the latest staged reading from By the Sea Productions. Photo by Janice Peters The latest staged reading from By the Sea Productions involves two passengers on an early morning commuter train who exchange comments about the NY Times crossword puzzle both are working on. Despite very different crossword styles, and lifestyles, a flirtation develops. "2 Across" playwright Jerry Mayer is a screenwriter for many TV comedy shows including "All in the Family," "The Facts of Life," and "Tabitha." This script is both funny and sweet as these two strangers get to know each other. Janice Peters directs this staged reading, featuring Lisa Woske and Daniel Freeman as the couple. The show plays one weekend only, July 11-13 at 545 Shasta Ave. in Morro Bay. Reservations can be made at bytheseaproductions.org or by calling 805-776-3287.

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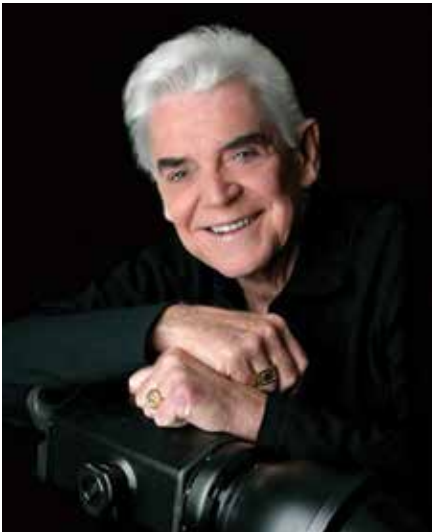
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Obituary

Jack Fillmore Betts

1929 – 2025



Jack Fillmore Betts passed peacefully on Thursday, June 19, at his home in Los Osos. He was 96.

Before moving to Los Osos in 2021, Jack had a long acting career spanning from Hollywood to Italy. A debonair character actor, he starred in spaghetti Westerns, played Dracula on Broadway and appeared in such notable films as “Spider-Man” and “Gods and Monsters.”

He was born on April 11, 1929, in



Jersey City, New Jersey. At 10, he moved with his family to Miami, Florida and was inspired to become an actor after seeing Laurence Olivier in “Wuthering Heights.” He studied theater at the University of Miami and then moved to New York, making it to Broadway in 1953 in “Richard III.”

From 1979-85, Jack portrayed Llanview Hospital’s doctor Ivan Kipling on ABC’s “One Life to Live.” His soap opera résumé also included stints on “General

Hospital,” “The Edge of Night,” “The Doctors,” “Another World,” “All My Children,” “Search for Tomorrow,” “Guiding Light,” “Loving,” and “Generations.”

In Italy, going by the name Hunt Powers, he played the title role in Franco Giraldi’s “Sugar Colt.” The film kicked off a run of about 15 spaghetti Westerns in which he starred. During this time, he worked next door to Clint Eastwood who was starring in a different series. A strong character in life as well as on screen, Jack acquired the role by stating he could ride a horse and had just won a shooting contest — despite never having been on a horse or handled a gun.

Jack’s resume included such films as “The Assassination of Trotsky,” “Falling

Down,” “Batman Forever,” “Batman & Robin,” “8MM” and “Office Space” as well as many TV series including “Gunsmoke,” “The F.B.I.,” “It Takes a Thief,” Kojak, “Remington Steele,” “Frasier,” “Everybody Loves Raymond,” “Friends,” “My Name Is Earl,” “The Mentalist,” and “Monk.”

He also wrote a play, “Screen Test: Take One,” about a soap opera that originated on a film set, and was working on a memoir.

Jack is survived by his nephew, Estero Bay News Publisher Dean Sullivan, his nieces, Lynne and Gail Johnson, grand-nephew, Ryan Sullivan, and his sister, Joan Sullivan, who will be 100 in November.

Publisher’s Comment

My uncle, Jack Betts, meant a lot to me. We laughed, we cried, we traveled, and we enjoyed life to the fullest. This was a man that lived his life on his terms with no regrets. He never stopped working, all the way up to the end — still writing, working on a play and his autobiography. The man had more love for life than one can imagine. He will be missed, and he will be remembered by me and the people whose lives he touched.

Dean Sullivan

Letters To The Editor

Love the Blotter



My husband and I were in your neck of the woods in the beginning of May. I have been meaning to message you to let you know how much we enjoyed your newspaper. We liked reading all the local stories. We really got a kick out of the Po-

lice Blotter! What a fun read! The writer made it very entertaining...even though it was police activity. Anyway, you brought smiles to our faces, and we thank you!

Judy and Allan Fletcher
Anaheim, CA

Redlight Greenlight

For such a small town, and a relatively low population density area we sure as hell have a lot of folks from out of town, with lots of money and questionable ethics and tactics, interested in us!



Case in point; the DC based Greenlight America non-profit. They are politically and ideologically motivated to focus on our small coastal towns by the desire to influence public sentiment on utility scale “clean energy” projects. In the past they have donated tens of thousands of dollars to influence the public on the A-24 ballot

measure that if defeated would have opened the door for the much-contested proposed Vistra BESS project on the Morro Bay National Estuary and at the entrance to the Morro Bay Harbor. Even with the canvassing, direct mail projects and costly marketing, their efforts failed, and sanity and conservation won the day.


Now, Greenlight America is interfering again in our local issues and attempting to influence our local citizens’ opinions regarding offshore wind and the “necessity for our county to embrace the industri-

Letters Continued on page 18

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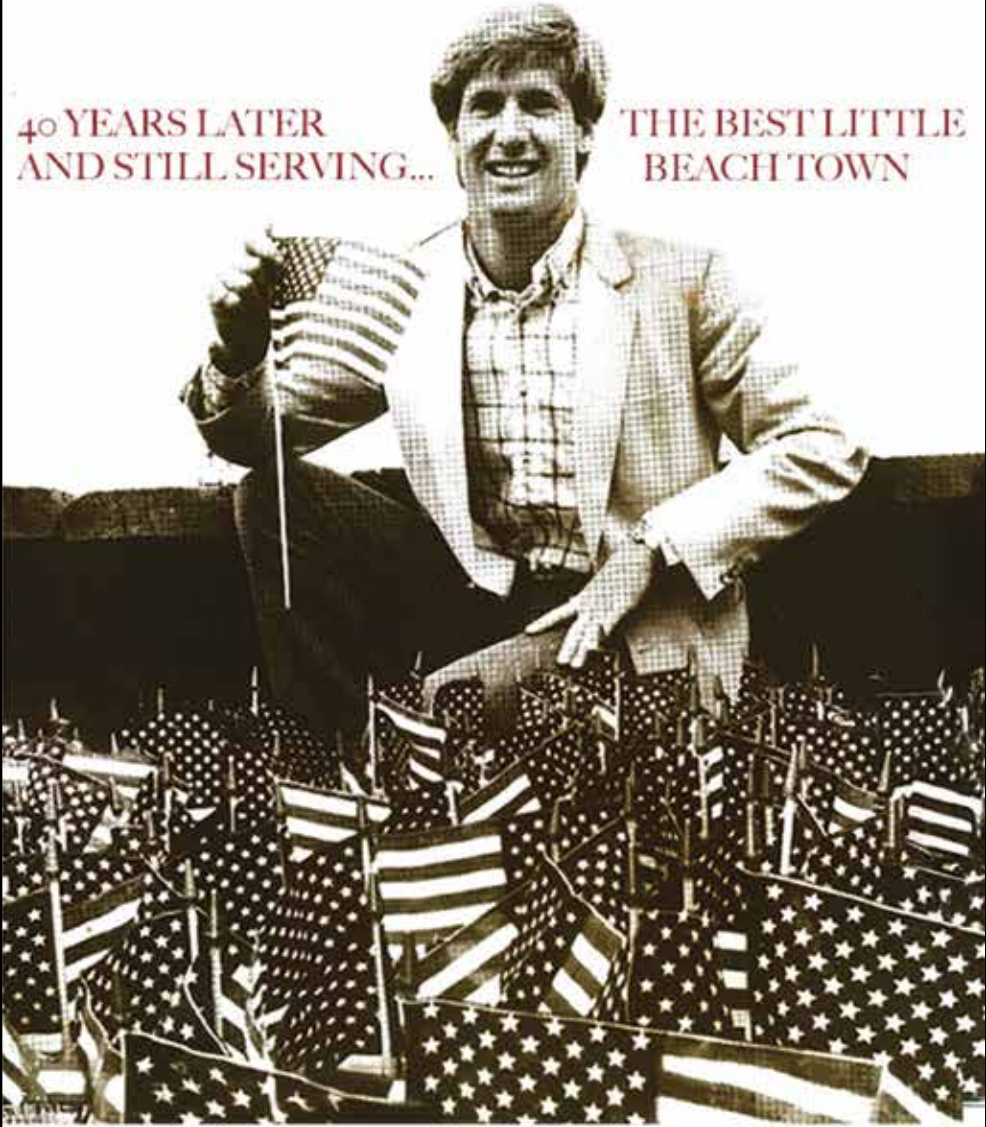


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Letters From page 17

alization of our oceans and coastal communities by the offshore wind industry.” With canvassing and social media posts they are presenting themselves as concerned local citizens ...THEY ARE NOT! It’s time we let these well-funded East Coast corporations and think tank employees know that we do not appreciate their interference and insinuation into our local environmental and economic affairs. We have a lot to lose if offshore wind is successfully established on the coast of central California. We cannot allow this kind of outside interference without a fight and the recognition that we see them for who they are — politically and economically motivated outsiders funded by huge investors with a stake in the success of offshore wind nationally and here in California.

Let’s “redlight” Greenlight. Call them out! Tell them we see them for who they are and shut the physical and metaphorical door in their faces! Let’s say a resounding “NO” to offshore wind and its development here on our beautiful and “Old California” Central Coast. We don’t want outside influencers here and we sure as shit don’t need an industry here that will decimate our oceans and coastal communities for decades to come!

Mandy Davis
President REACT Alliance

League of Women Voters Joins Letter Opposing cuts to Medicaid

Dear Members of Congress:
On behalf of 183 state and national advocates concerned about the medical debt crisis in our country, we write to express our strong opposition to Medicaid cuts. Medicaid plays a vital role in preventing medical debt by offering affordable health coverage to almost 80 million individuals and decreasing their likelihood of experiencing financial strain. We urge you to do everything in your power to protect this critical program.
About 100 million U.S. adults have unpaid medical or dental bills, or about 41 percent of adults. This debt is not just a financial burden; it has serious health implications. About two-thirds of those with medical debt have put off care that they or a family member needed because of costs. Medical debt is associated with mental health issues like depression and anxiety, as well as foregoing needed mental health care.
Medicaid protects patients from medical debt and improves their overall financial well-being. One analysis found that 79 out of the 100 counties with the highest levels of medical debt were in states that had not expanded Medicaid. By contrast, new medical debt dropped by 34 percentage points more in states that expanded Medicaid as compared with states that did not. Medicaid expansion has also been shown to reduce bills sent to collections and to

decrease bankruptcy filings.
Significantly, Medicaid is especially effective at protecting those most vulnerable from medical debt. For instance, Medicaid is a key source of coverage for people with disabilities, 15 million of whom rely on Medicaid. Given their substantial medical costs, people with disabilities are more than twice as likely to report medical debt as those without disabilities. With most people with disabilities lacking access to employer-based coverage, cuts to Medicaid would prove especially harmful to this population.
Likewise, Medicaid provides health coverage for over 17 million people over age 50. This includes 6.5 million older adults enrolled in the Medicare Savings Programs, which cover all or part of the premiums and cost-sharing requirements for Medicare. Medicaid also helps families pay for quality nursing home care. Currently, over one in five older adults has medical debt, and that number will increase significantly if current Medicaid benefits do not remain in place.
Medicaid is the largest payor for long-term care in the country, which allows older adults to live independently in their community by providing assistance with essential life tasks such as eating, bathing, and dressing. Significantly, Medicaid is also the primary source of support for many caregivers, including over 53 million U.S. adults who provide ongoing, complex care for loved ones with disabilities or health care needs. Nearly half of caregivers report financial strain, and any cuts to Medicaid threaten both their wellbeing and their important caregiving work.
Medicaid also covers more than 40 percent of births in the United States and insures more than 16 million women of reproductive age. New mothers are already twice as likely as women who have not recently given birth to have medical debt, and this disparity would increase significantly if current Medicaid coverage does not remain in place.
Beyond its immediate success in averting medical debt, Medicaid also yields longterm financial benefits. Studies show that Medicaid increases future earning opportunities for young people—important, given that lower-income adults are more likely to have medical debt than their wealthier counterparts. Significantly, children who bene-

fited from Medicaid eligibility expansions are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to graduate from college. Increased childhood Medicaid eligibility also leads to higher earnings in adulthood. In addition, the majority of employed people with Medicaid insurance in Ohio and Michigan reported that Medicaid made it easier for them to work or helped them do a better job at work.
In short, Medicaid coverage is a powerful tool to protect families from the crushing burden of medical debt while also improving their longer-term financial trajectory. We urge all policymakers committed to reducing medical debt and improving economic security to oppose any cuts to Medicaid and instead commit to protecting and preserving a program critical to your constituents’ health and wellbeing.

League of Women Voters of the United States

Trump’s Bullying Endangers Us All

There’s more to leadership than wielding power. When Trump acts, it’s not just personal — it defines America to the world, often with dangerous consequences.
When he sent the National Guard, then the Marines, into Los Angeles, his actions escalated fear and conflict. He stoked a crisis, then used it to justify further aggression — a feedback loop of provocation.
His belligerence toward Iran shows a similar pattern. His public insults helped drive Iranian leaders away from the bargaining table. Then he used their silence to justify sending U.S. bombers. I don’t support Iran’s leadership, but I also don’t support bypassing Congress to take us to war without examining the potential consequences.
Trump’s repeated targeting of Muslim countries and travelers sends a message: that we are at war not just with governments, but with peoples. That message endangers our safety, our diplomacy, and our values.
If we don’t speak out, we risk being seen as complicit —

Letters Continued on page 23



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News

Pumping From page 1

a year, an average of the pumping over the past five years. The study had issues with the spatial pumping, or the locations of the various wells in the basin and concluded that the current setup “is not sustainable.”

And seawater intrusion will continue, though it could be slowed down.

Munds pointed out that the study also assumes no new growth, which after recent actions by the County and Coastal Commission in accepting previous studies on the basin, had been poised to reopen the town to very limited housing growth, after seeing basically zero growth since the 1988 cease and desist order was given by the Regional Water Board over the need for a community sewer system.

The County managed to get that collection system and treatment plant constructed, finishing in 2016, which included a robust wastewater recycling component using a giant leach field located on a hillside above Broderson Avenue.

He said they knew when they did the steady modeling that it was limited in what it could predict as to future groundwater basin sustainability. “That’s why we embarked on the transient model,” he said. They don’t particularly like the outcome, but that’s just the way it goes.

They also question the “safe annual yield” used, the 1,800 AFY, a number arrived at using the old static modeling. “We need to re-do that using the new model,” Munds said. “It’s a tough thing to do, you base decisions on the best available data and science, and now we have new data and science.”

He said the water companies — the CSD, Golden State Water, Co., S&T Mutual — are reviewing the studies and would come up with options to pursue.

The County, which doesn’t sell water here anymore, but does control land use decisions, would have to use this new study in reviewing whether grow should still be allowed.

“The purpose of the Transient Model,” reads the CHG report, “is to provide a calibrated, dynamic tool that can simulate seawater intrusion, groundwater levels, and stream flow in order to estimate Basin sustainable yield and potential impacts to water resources for management scenarios.”

The study of the basin will continue, Munds said, with the next reports, due in August, modeling the safe yield using the new transient modeling. The review of the CHG report, indicated there was room for improvement through management and moving wells away from the west side of town, where seawater is intruding, and that will be done over the next several years through the Annual Water Monitoring Reports.

Another issue down the pipeline is building a connection to the Chorro Valley Pipeline, the water line that brings State Water to Morro Bay and which the CSD hopes to tap into to bring some 200-acre feet a year into Los Osos to supplement the groundwater, ease off the pumping and in turn combat seawater intrusion.

Munds said he’s long thought the town needed a supplemental water supply coming from outside the area

and State Water is the likely source. SLO County still holds entitlement to thousands of acre feet of State Water, which is being paid for but is unsubscribed to by the State Water subscribers.

And the County is starting to talk about desalination as a new water source.

So far, these studies have cost some \$400,000 with the majority of that coming from the State Water Board grant and the County paying about \$54,000. The three water companies have to cover the remainder.

While some rejoiced over the loosening of growth restrictions, opponents are apparently celebrating now, as these new basin studies tend to support their position that there isn’t enough groundwater here to sustain even the current population’s usage, so no new development should be allowed.

The Basin Management Committee will continue with their first stage plans — moving new wells eastward, away from the seawater intrusion, which at last check had stretched nearly to Palisades Avenue.

“The water purveyors are facing tough decisions,” Munds said.

Tiny Bridge From page 1

according to the website for GEM, a leading manufacturer of LSVs (see www.gemcar.com/street-legal-carts).

True golf carts are meant to use on golf courses (or private property like large industrial sites) and have almost none of this safety equipment. True golf carts are illegal to drive on the street. Some models of LSVs look a lot like a golf cart, but have the aforementioned safety equipment, which adds to the confusion.

One of those South Cayucos residents, Doug Wisecarver, who has an LSV and has used the Cabrillo Bridge as a route into Downtown for years, said a lot of folks in town have bought these vehicles, many from a dealer in Morro Bay. Some use them for helping homebound neighbors, delivering food and medicine, and others like being able to get out of the house and enjoy the community without searching for parking Downtown.

For the LSV owners in South Cayucos, not having this bridge available prohibits them from using their carts. “This is putting a hardship on elderly people,” Wisecarver said.

LSVs are not legal to take onto a highway, either, not even on the shoulder, Wisecarver said.

The LSVs allow folks to leave their cars at home when running errands, which is something being advocated for by those who want to lower vehicle emissions.

“Sometimes I don’t even start my truck for a week,” Wisecarver said.

In many ways, the LSVs have increased mobility, especially for the elderly who may not want to risk the freeway just to go get a loaf of bread, or to go enjoy a sunset on the Pier.

Another modern mobility assistance contraption is an e-bike, which has two basic types — pedal assist bikes and full on electric motorized bikes with a throttle and capable

of going 25 mph. The difference between an e-bike and a scooter like a Moped is in the engine’s power capacity. E-bikes are legal to ride on bike lanes but Mopeds, electric scooters, and LSVs are not, even though they are all capable of going roughly the same speed.

E-bikes are wildly popular now and Wisecarver said they work great for people, until they can’t physically ride them anymore. That’s where the LSVs have been a Godsend.

“People who can’t ride a regular bike,” he said, “enjoy an e-bike. But some people are not able to ride any bike,” and that’s where the LSVs come in handy. He noted that LSVs are licensed and insured and while some “look like golf carts” they are street legal.

The Reilly Bridge was perfect for them to use, and had been used for about 15 years, until it got closed off by the County.

It’s possible to cross Hwy 1 at 24th Street and still get into Downtown, but that is inherently risky maneuver. Unfortunately, these are the only two ways to go from south to north (and back again) in Cayucos, as Old Creek is a natural barrier.

Things were fine, Wisecarver said, with a handful of LSVs using the Reilly Bridge, some on a daily basis. Then the pedestrian-cart encounter happened, and the County woke up to the situation. Waddell said they replaced the missing bollards. E-bikes and regular bikes can still cross it, as well as walkers and joggers, but the electric carts can’t get through.

Wisecarver and his fellow LSV owners, were shocked to find their only safe way into Downtown suddenly blocked to their carts, “with no real explanation why from Public Works,” he said. ‘They didn’t give notice to anyone.’

The matter blew up on the social platform, Nextdoor, and has now morphed into a petition drive by the residents, to try and get Public Works to reopen the bridge to their carts.

Waddell said when they saw all the posts, they responded with a lengthy explanation of why this was done.

“The bridge was constructed decades ago,” reads the County’s post, “for the sole purpose of a bicycle and pedestrian bridge. It was not designed for vehicles, including golf carts, and is not rated to handle the weight of these vehicles often seen in Cayucos. This puts the integrity of the bridge at risk, which could result in human injury.”

The bridge is posted with a weight limit of 3,500 pounds and according to the Federal Department of Energy, “the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) defines an LSV as a 4-wheeled vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 3,000 pounds,” so the weight of one LSV on the bridge at a time isn’t an issue. But Waddell said it could be problematic if there were several on the bridge at one time.

The LSV owners believe this could be addressed with signage, and speed issues could be addressed with something like speed bumps meant to slow the carts down.

The bridge’s integrity is also important to the County because, Waddell said, the bridge has a water main attached to it that carries drinking water from the County’s nearby water treatment plant to half the town, and there’s also a fiber optic communications cable attached to it.

“The bridge also has water and telecommunication facilities connected to it,” reads the Nextdoor post, “that are critical to the health and safety of the entire town of Cayucos and greater North Coast Region.

“As the operator of the water system in Cayucos, we cannot put your water supply unnecessarily at risk of damage or failure, and do not want to impact cellular, Internet or first responder communications.”

Wisecarver said the bollards went missing about two years after the bridge was built and over all these years there’s been no problems until now. And with 4th of July coming up, he said the folks in South Cayucos won’t be able to use their LSVs to go into town for the parade and will instead have to drive their regular cars into town, taking up even more parking than the thousands of people here for the spectacle.

The County’s Nextdoor post acknowledges the problem and vows to look for a solution.

Tiny Bridge Continued on page 20



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Tiny Bridge From page 19

“Since it is not safe for vehicles to use this bridge,” the post said, “Public Works is working with Supervisor [Bruce] Gibson’s Office to explore options that may in the future allow for low-speed vehicle access between the north and south parts of your community.”

“Again, sorry for the inconvenience. We honestly hope this explanation of the situation provides a better understanding of the reasons for the bollards being re-installed.”

Waddell was asked by EBN what that solution might look like. He said they are approaching the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments or SLOCOG, the countywide agency that distributes road maintenance monies to the cities and the County to pay for such projects. But funding through SLOCOG is a long process that can take years to navigate.

Waddell said they are thinking maybe a second bridge, built to carry motorized vehicles could be the answer, but

crossing a creek, in the Coastal Zone will take a mountain of study and probably cost a lot of money.

It also isn’t likely to satisfy the folks who need access now.

Challenges From page 1

a community effort, from our hardworking staff to our wonderful patients to our generous local donors to our selfless volunteers.

“This recognition by Assemblymember Addis is especially meaningful given the efforts she is currently taking to preserve equitable access to health services within District 30 as well as her efforts to support healthcare for undocumented people.”

The recognition comes at a time when nonprofits across the nation are feeling the impact of President Donald Trumps policy shifts that come with federal funding cuts and the elimination of tax benefits among other changes.

Parro says that recent cutbacks in San Luis Obispo County and its local government spending has “deeply affected” SLONF, which doesn’t rely on any other state and/or federal programs nor receive reimbursement from insurance companies.

Roughly 36% of the SLO Noor Foundation’s funding comes from community and/or business donations. Currently, donations remain stable but grant funding has declined.

“With federal funding being slashed,” Parro said, “many local and national grant programs have had a huge influx of new applicants and less funds to distribute, meaning grant funding of all kinds is becoming increasingly competitive and challenging. Now, more than ever, the SLO Noor Foundation needs your help – whether that be \$10 or 10 minutes of your time sharing with others about our services.”

Donations to SLONF can be made at slonoorfoundation.org/donate.

Another issue on the horizon is potential cuts to Medicaid that could result in a loss of health coverage for up to 3.4 million Californians, according to the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom.

In response SLONF is expanding its outreach and community awareness “We’re prepared and ready to support all our community members, ensuring their wellbeing, privacy, and health are all prioritized,” Parro said. “Being uninsured does not have an age limit or a certain demographic – instead, over 50,000 individuals are estimated to be uninsured in San Luis Obispo County and Santa Barbara County by the US Census Bureau.”

Then there are the recent Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids, such as those that made world news in Los Angeles, CA. The fear of ICE showing up at clinics has hit home in SLO County as well. In some cases, vaccinations, prescriptions, and care management are left unattended.

“During this time of societal and political polarization, SLONF and its Health Clinics are witnessing that undocumented and/or immigrant patients are experiencing increased hesitancy and fear going about their day-to-day lives,” Parro said. “The fear of deportation, along with possible ICE raids, has forced undocumented and immigrant communities to shelter-in-place, much like during a natural disaster. By staying in their homes, undocumented and immigrant individuals may feel better able to protect themselves and their loved ones from possible interactions with law enforcement or immigration officials. Consequently, they often deprioritize their healthcare and experience worsened health conditions.”

Parro said that during the SLO Noor Free Mobile Clinic’s most recent weekly visit to Paso Robles, there were three no-show patients, which is rare for the clinic.

“Understandably, many of the SLONF’s undocumented or

immigrant patients currently feel that the risk of deportation is more pressing than any healthcare risks plaguing them,” he said.

SLONF is currently addressing these needs by increasing telehealth services, so patients don’t need to come in person; consolidating patient appointments by offering phlebotomy inhouse so patients don’t need to go to an additional location; and amplifying advocacy and information.

They are also prepared should ICE agents show up at one of their health clinics.

“We worked with another local nonprofit, UndocuSupport, and Joel Diring, a local attorney and healthcare advocate, to train our staff and volunteers in how to properly respond should ICE agents arrive at one of our clinics. Additionally, we provide red cards [that outlines an individual’s constitutional rights when interacting with immigration or law enforcement officials] and other immigration resources to our patients. As always, the safety and wellbeing of our patients and staff is the utmost priority.”

Founded in 2009, SLONF currently has 125 active monthly volunteers who provide more than 850 monthly volunteer hours throughout the nonprofit’s clinics. Volunteer roles include medical, dental, vision, and mental health care professionals, volunteer students, and numerous other community members including doctors, nurse practitioners, dentists, hygienists, optometrists, ophthalmologists, nurses, medical assistants, phlebotomists, clinic assistants, scribes, grant writers, administrative assistants, and more.

“The SLO Noor Foundation is incredibly lucky to have such talented staff members and dedicated volunteers,” Parro said. “We believe that healthcare and access to healthcare services are universal rights, meaning no one should go without healthcare because they cannot afford it or easily access it. In fighting for healthcare equality, the SLO Noor Foundation has fostered an inclusive community and volunteer base, all of whom are passionate about our mission.”

In 2024, the SLO Noor Foundation treated 1,873 unique patients and provided 6,035 visits. Of these encounters, 613 healthcare visits were provided to 150 Morro Bay, Cayucos, Cambria, and Los Osos community members.

“In providing free, accessible healthcare to uninsured individuals, the SLONF does not only extend the lifespans of patients but also improves the everyday health and quality of life for every individual served,” Parro said. “By effectively addressing the health concerns of SLONF patients, these same persons are better able to pursue education, care for their families, work, and otherwise contribute to their communities.”

A healthier community at large also saves the County money and relieves local emergency departments. A 2024 study, “Prevalence of Chronic Disease and Cost Effectiveness of a Free Clinic,” by the National Library of Medicine, found that the SLO Noor Clinic’s services in 2022 resulted in \$11.5 million in cost savings and a return on investment of \$13.18 per \$1 invested.

The SLO Noor Foundation can be reached at (805) 439-1797. They are headquartered at 1428 Phillip’s Lane Suite 203, San Luis Obispo.

Readers looking to utilize the Free Mobile Health Clinic can check out the summer schedule, which is regularly updated to add locations and mobile appointments, at SLONoorFoundation.org and click “Become a Patient” under the Mobile Health Clinic tab.

SLONF has been selected as the 2025 SLO Park Palooza beneficiary and will receive profits from the family event that takes place August 2, at Dairy Creek Golf Course, 2990 Dairy Creek Rd, San Luis Obispo from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. The event features live music, athletic competitions, vendors, art, food and fun. Tickets will soon be available at my805tix.com,

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7/11 - 7/24
SUPERMAN
2 HR 9 MIN (PG13)
3:45PM & 7PM
SUNDAYS AT
12:45PM & 4PM

MONDAY SPECIALS

7/7
THELMA AND LOUISE
(1991)
2 HR 9 MIN (R)
5:30PM
PRESENTED BY
SOUTH BAY
WOMEN'S NETWORK

7/14
ART & LIFE: THE STORY OF JIM PHILLIPS
(2024)
1 HR 30 MIN (NR)
5:30PM
Q&A WITH FILMMAKER
JOHN MAKENS AFTER
SHOW

SATURDAY MATINEE

7/12
SHREK
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News

City Manager From page 1
email.

Mayor Carla Wixom responded, “She will be unable to answer this email as she is no longer employed by the city; dismissed without cause on a 3 to 2 vote.”

The June 24 closed session agenda had three items on it, two having to do with negotiations on the old sewer plant and on the possible purchase of Morro Elementary, and an item listed as, “PUBLIC EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE/ DISCIPLINE/ DISMISSAL/ RELEASE Pursuant to Government Code section 54957. Title: City Manager.”

But what would normally be a routine performance review, turned into a firing session.

Kimball, who was an at-will employee, served at the pleasure of the Council, and was let go not for doing anything wrong, but because she somehow fell out of favor with three of the five council members.

The 3-2 vote had Councilwomen Zara Landrum and Cyndee Edwards and Councilman Bill Luffee vote “Yes,” and Mayor Wixom and Councilman Jeff Eckles vote “No” to immediately letting Kimball go.

Mayor Wixom declined to comment on the reason for her firing, sending this statement to the newspaper, “I cannot share personnel information.”

Estero Bay News queried each of the council members seeking comment or a statement of any kind, but none were willing to discuss it.

Mayor Wixom referred EBN to the City Attorney.

Interim City Attorney, Rob Schultz, confirmed the vote and added, “Due to privacy regulations, the City will not be providing further comment on this personnel matter.”

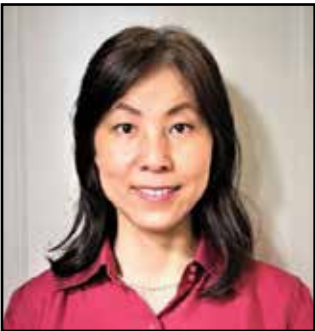
Council watchdog, Barry Branin, who has been a leader in the fight against a proposed battery plant here, said he was not surprised by what happened.

“It has appeared to me that there was little leadership from the city manager. The Council and Mayor had to push to get things done.”

Another local activist, former Councilwoman Betty Winholtz, had a different take. “I thought she was one of the least political managers we have had,” Winholtz commented. “Maybe that was her downfall.”

So, who’s in charge now? The City doesn’t have an “assistant city manager” position that would likely step up on at least an interim basis.

City Clerk Dana Swanson was asked about this and replied, “We don’t have an Assistant CM position; there was an Assistant to the CM, but that position is vacant. The Council will meet in closed session tomorrow afternoon [Friday, June 27] to select an Acting/Interim City Manager.”



Former City Manager, Yvonne Kimball, was fired ‘without cause’ by a split Morro Bay City Council on June 24. Kimball had been with the City since August 2023.

In the past, when this situation has arisen, the City has brought in someone from outside, normally a retired city manager or administrator who is able to fill in on a limited basis. That’s what Interim City Attorney Schultz is doing now.

Kimball was one of the shortest-lived managers the City has had, lasting less than two years on the job.

Kimball was hired in June 2023 to replace Scott Collins, who had resigned some time before to take a job with the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo. Collins has since left HASLO and become the Assistant City Manager in SLO.

Kimball started her job with the City that August. Greg Carpenter had been serving as Interim City Manager immediately after Collins left.

Kimball was hired by the City after “a vigorous recruitment process” led by a consultant, Mosaic Public, a public employee executive search firm. She was chosen out of 41 applicants.

Mosaic narrowed the choices down to six who were reviewed by the City Council, which chose the Top-2 candidates.

Those two were interviewed by “various stakeholders” followed by interviews with the City Council, a comprehensive background check and thorough assessments of their references. Kimball was selected and offered the job.

She came here with 15-years of administrative experience most recently working as City Manager in Jackson, Calif., a small town in the Sierra Foothills with a population of some 5,000.

Previously, she was Town Manager in Dewey-Humboldt, Ariz., from 2012-2017. She was also City Manager in Bowling Green, Fla., from 2008-2011.

Education-wise she holds a bachelor’s degree in business English from Tianjin Institute of Technology in China and holds a master’s degree in public administration from the University of Central Florida.

Because she was let go without cause, she is contractually entitled to six months of severance pay, but Schultz said her contract does not also pay for any continued benefits.

According to the current salary schedule the City Manager position’s top salary level was listed at just over \$222,000 a year; six months of that would be about \$111,000.

Teens Stabbed From page 9

The victims were transported to a local hospital for treatment. One juvenile victim was discharged shortly after. The second was transferred to a specialized care facility for continued observation. Both are expected to recover, said officials.

“The investigation determined that a knife was used in the assault. At this time, it does not appear the suspects and victims knew each other prior to the incident,” the news release says.

The case is ongoing. Anyone with additional information is asked to contact the Detective Division at (805) 781-4500.

Firehouse From page 1



The Morro Bay City Council approved rebuilding the living quarters at the Bonita Street Fire Station, the 1-story ‘house’ to the left.



Rendering shows what the Bonita Street Fire Station’s new living quarters would look like.

incorporation in 1964 unified the city.

The little station has an apparatus bay that was rebuilt about 20-years ago, and a small house used for living quarters. But the station hasn’t been staffed in decades and while the apparatus bay has been rebuilt, the living quarters are, well, unlivable.

Fire Chief Daniel McCrain’s staff report said the City has two fire stations — the main station on Harbor Street and the station at 460 Bonita St. But Bonita Street (officially “Station 54”) “has been unstaffed since the 1970s,” the Chief said. “Over the years, this station has served as a Fire Chief residence, and as storage for additional Fire Department apparatus and equipment that could be accessed by off duty and Reserve Firefighters for emergency response.”

At one time, the City intended to build a new fire station on a nearly 1-acre parcel at Coral and San Jacinto, donated to the City as part of The Cloisters Subdivision for the specific purpose of building a fire station.

But after the December 2003 San Simeon Earthquake damaged the apparatus bay at the Harbor Street Station, priorities changed and the Cloisters parcel was eventually sold, and the proceeds used to pay off a Federal USDA Loan the City got to rebuild the Harbor Street Station.

So, while they got a new firehouse that will probably be in service for 50-plus years, they still have an issue of response times to the north end of town. It’s a long-standing issue, made worse by changing standards for firefighters, which the department tries hard to meet.

In 2001, the City had a study done to look at response times with one and two stations, specifically considering The Cloisters lot for a new location instead of Bonita Street.

“Ideally,”

Firehouse Continued on page 22



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Firehouse From page 21

Chief McCrain said, “a 2-station model with one in North Morro Bay and one in South Morro Bay was found to be the ideal configuration due to a variety of factors. Single station models with a centralized fire station were evaluated and still left portions of town with extended response times and did not address resiliency for flooding and other factors that prevent travel.”

The City has twice been flooded by an overflowing Morro Creek, closing down Main Street and even Hwy 1, and effectively cutting the town in half.

The City Council has looked at this situation a couple of times and in 2004 they set in motion a project to rebuild Bonita Street, which succeeded in the apparatus bay rebuild, but the economy soured in 2008 and they haven’t been able to get back to it.

Meanwhile, the call volume has increased considerably. Back in 2003, they were running about 1,500 calls a year, and the fire chief said that has now risen to 2,200, with up to 40% coming from North Morro Bay.

“The response time standard,” Chief McCrain said, “of having an engine on scene in under 5 minutes, 90% of the time is greatly exceeded in North Morro Bay. The impact of delayed service can be devastating and support the need for rapid response. Emergency services are always fighting the clock.”

In the most recent big storm that caused flooding, in January 2023, the department was able to move a crew to Bonita Street and respond to calls from there, somewhat roughing it through the storm.

“The crew placed cots for sleeping in the apparatus bay and utilized a former employee’s house in The Cloisters for access to a bathroom and kitchen,” the Chief explained. “This arrangement was substandard in meeting the needs of the response personnel, but it was a tactical decision made to ensure the ability to continue providing services to half of the city during an evolving emergency. During this event we were unable to rely on mutual aid resources because the entire county was affected by this storm and every route in and out of the city was closed due to flooding.”

The department went out for bids to get a design firm, Hunter Smith Architecture, on board with rebuilding Bonita Street and the company came up with some options ranging from fixing what they have to a complete rebuild in one or 2-stories.

The cost varied greatly, and the City Council directed Chief McCrain to move forward with the 2-story option, which estimated at over \$2.3 million, was the most expensive.

“The primary benefit of this option,” the report said, “is that it provides adequate space for all current and anticipated departmental needs and allows for future departmental growth and changes without incurring significant renovation costs in the future.”

What they chose was a 2,322 square foot, 2-story structure, which is basically a house with three bedrooms, two bathrooms, living room and kitchen upstairs with office and “operational space” downstairs.

“Every aspect of the design,” the report said, “has a specific purpose to meet operational needs and to allow for changing requirements as the fire service evolves, technologies are updated, and the needs of the community evolve.”

As for costs, they need about \$17,500 to pay for a conceptual design that would produce drawings needed for a Coastal Development Permit, with another \$75,000 needed for final construction drawings, for a total of \$93,000 for design work.

Chief McCrain said they have some \$38,000 in the Fire Department impact fee fund, and the Council approved spending \$54,000 out of Measure Q and E monies. Those are special sales taxes the voters approved to support public safety, roads and storm drain maintenance. The added costs of furnishings and appliances are not included in these estimates.

With a preliminary price tag of over \$2.3 million, that leaves the department a bit short. But the Council approved letting the department hunt up construction money, and Chief McCrain said there are some State and Federal grant programs he intends to try and tap.

Among those is the USDA’s Rural Assistance low interest loan, which the City was able to get to build the Harbor Street Fire Station, and a grant program through the Federal Emergency Management Agency or FEMA.

No matter where the money ultimately comes from, with the Harbor Street Station loan now fully paid off, money from Measures Q and E should again be able to be used to repay any loans they may have to get for Bonita Street.

July Events From page 12

sell their works to the art loving public, a sort-of temporary galleria of artisans working in wood, photography, painting, clothing and more.

The event is held on three, holiday weekends a year — Memorial Day, 4th of July and Labor Day — and is a major fundraiser for the Art Association.

City park is located in the 700 block of Harbor Street and Morro Bay Boulevard. Free to attend. Hours are Friday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 10-4.

Pismo Beach



The Pismo Pier is another place for folks to see a fireworks display in SLO County. Photo submitted

Pismo Beach will host its annual Fourth of July celebration with a full day of seaside fun. The Pier Plaza opens at 9 a.m. with vendors followed by live music from noon to 9 p.m. At 9 p.m., fireworks will be launched from the Pismo Pier, offering great views from both the beach and the plaza.

San Luis Obispo

Enjoy fireworks after the Blues Baseball Game taking place July 3 from 6 p.m. – 10 p.m. at 900 Southwood Drive. The San Luis Obispo Blues will take on the Arroyo Seco Saints.

Cello Goblin in Morro Bay



By Theresa-Marie Wilson

Rushad Eggleston, who calls himself “its majesty rushar-guanox the infamous cello goblin” on Instagram, was recently spotted in Morro Bay on the corner of Morro Bay Boulevard and Monterey St. A small crowd watched him climb a telephone pole and play his cello fiddle-style while dressed in a jester costume of sorts.

His website states, “Rushad Eggleston was born a snethy and robust child in a redwood cabin, in a redwood canyon, in Big Sur, CA (a very mystical zone). He began playing stringed instruments at the age of three and has basically done so, all the time, for all of his life, ever since. Rushad is now a cello playing adult goblin man (still snethy and robust), who facilitates global bejickment and glee. He is currently undergoing rigorous wizard training (his uncle is a wizard).”

Eggleston, who performs in his own imaginary language, was nominated for a Grammy for Best Traditional Folk Album in 2002. He has been touring as a solo act since 2013. He now tours the world.

Letters From page 18

not just in policy, but in cruelty. That’s a dangerous legacy to leave for future generations: a world where Americans are viewed not as good people, but as enemies to be attacked.

Don Maruska
Los Osos

Blotter Love Part 2

I just need to tell you how much I love reading your Police Blotter! I have been coming to your city for 30 years, at least twice a year, every year for vacation and look forward to reading it! I don’t know why, but for some reason I just figured out I could read it online. I have shared my coveted paper copy of Estero Bay news with all my friends whenever I pick it up on vacation! Thank you for keeping this genius comedy writer on staff, whoever it is, is amazing!

I will be picking up my next paper copy in July when I come for my annual stay!

Thank you for providing such a wonderful paper.

April Adamson
Covina, California

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Rotary Names More Public Heroes

Photos by Kim Cade

The Morro Bay Rotary Club honored several “Public Heroes,” at their regular luncheon meetings on June 24, as club members got to honor folks in the community they feel go above and beyond in public service.

Seven people were given certificates of appreciation, commemorating their recognition of all they do for the residents of Morro Bay and the greater San Luis Obispo County.



Morro Bay Rotary Club President John Weiss, at left, poses with Brian Murphy a long time volunteer with Court Appointed Special Advocates or CASA, a non-profit organization that helps children in the court system. Murphy also is a long-time volunteer Youth Advocate at Lompoc Maple High School, a model continuation school.



Jon “Woody” Wordsworth, right, was honored by retired emergency dispatcher, Dan Costley, center, and Rotary President John Weiss. Woody, who works for Weiss at Coast Electronics, was honored for decades of service with the Civil Air Patrol, the Community Volunteers at MBPD, and the Sheriff’s Search and Rescue Team. Costley said Woody ahs been involved in hundreds of search and rescue missions up and down the State of California, helping to find and rescue plane crash survivors and lost hikers.



Morro Bay resident, Michael Shiffran, center, was honored for his 40-years of work as a counselor and caregiver. Rotary President-elect Jessica Weiss, at right, named Shiffran for the honors. At left is Rotary President John Weiss (Jessica’s dad).



Morro Bay Rotary Club honored seven people with Public Hero Awards at a recent club meeting. Pictured here are from left: MBPD Chief Amy Watkins, MBPD Sgt. Nicole Taylor, Jon Woody Wordsworth, Rotary President-elect Jessica Weiss, Rotary President John Weiss, MB Fire Capt. Jeff Simpson, MBHS teacher Blair Brinkman, CASA volunteer Michael Shiffran, Honor Flight Chairman, Bear McGill, and Brian Murphy with CASA.



Rotary President John Weiss, left, poses with retired Santa Maria Fire Chief Jeff Jones, Public Hero honoree, Morro Bay Fire Capt. Jeff Simpson, and retired MBFD Chief Mike Pond. Capt. Simpson was honored by two of his retired fire chiefs for his decades of service to Morro Bay.



Long-time Morro Bay High School teacher, Blair Brinkman, center, poses with Rotary President, John Weiss and at right, future Rotary President-elect, Jessica Weiss. Brinkman was honored for being an outstanding teacher and student advocate for many years at MBHS.



Rotary President John Weiss, left, poses with honoree Bear McGill of Central Coast Honor Flight, and at right, Peter Starlings of Los Osos who recently went on one of the Honor Flights, along with Weiss and his dad, Dick Weiss, that take military veterans to Washington D.C. to visit the various military memorials.



Morro Bay Police Sgt. Nicole Taylor, at right, was honored by Police Chief Amy Watkins, center, and Rotary President John Weiss. Sgt. Taylor, a 12-year veteran of MBPD was honored for her years of hard work and dedicated service to the department and the citizens of Morro Bay.



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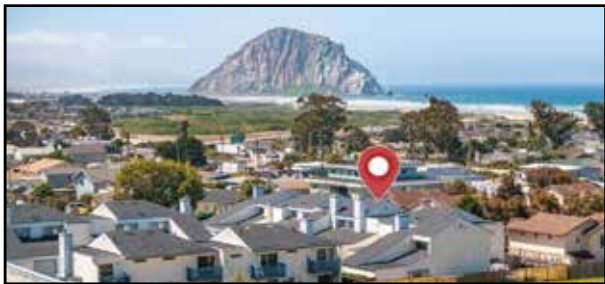
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