

After owner's death, Pfeiffer Beach shuttle keeps rolling — at least for now

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE MAN who started a shuttle service in Big Sur to combat traffic congestion along Sycamore Canyon Road unexpectedly passed away last week, but his business will continue to operate — at least until the end of Labor Day weekend.

Weston Call, who died Aug. 14 at the age of 32, owned and operated Sur Transportation, which launched a pilot program over Memorial Day Weekend to transport people down Sycamore Canyon Road to Pfeiffer Beach. Despite Call's death, the pilot program is still operating.

"Weston's family has picked up the torch," said Butch Kronlund, the president of the Coast Property Owners Association. "It's a testament to Weston that his family and friends are honoring him in this way to keep the shuttle operational through Labor Day."

It's unclear if the shuttle service will continue to operate after the busy three-day weekend, but Kronlund is impressed by what it accomplished this summer.

"It relieved pressure at the top of Sycamore Canyon Road, and it provided a safe and stress-free method for the public to get to

Pfeiffer Beach," he told The Pine Cone.

Call started the pilot program in response to longtime concerns by locals that heavy vehicle and pedestrian traffic along Sycamore Canyon Road poses a public safety threat. On busy days in recent years, hundreds of people could be seen walking two miles down the narrow and winding road to get to the beach — some even pushing baby strollers or carrying coolers.

The Pfeiffer Beach shuttle operates Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to a half hour before sunset. Motorists can leave their vehicles at Big Sur's Multi-Agency Facility, which is located just south of the entrance to Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park.

The cost to park at the multi-agency facility is \$10, and shuttle rides to the beach are \$5 per passenger. The shuttle arrives back at the multi-agency facility to pick up passengers every 20 minutes.

A county official, meanwhile, told The Pine Cone this week that it could be four to six weeks before it is determined how Call died. A fund in his name has been established at the Community Foundation for Monterey County.

MoCo hotline for STR complaints

By CHRIS COUNTS

COUNTY OFFICIALS launched a hotline this week for residents to call if they want to report "public nuisances" resulting from short term rentals in unincorporated areas.

The county's board of supervisors voted unanimously July 17 to approve using the hotline on a three-month trial basis.

The hotline is provided by Host Compliance, which specializes in short-term rent-

al compliance monitoring and enforcement solutions for local governments. The county tax collector contracts with the company to identify businesses that haven't paid transient occupancy taxes. During the trial period, the company won't charge the county to use the hotline.

"We launched the complaint hotline to better understand the community's nuisance concerns about short term rentals," county

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INITIATIVE

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changed to “The Monterey Peninsula Water System Local Ownership Initiative.”

“The statement that it’s going to ‘save costs’ is not supported by any evidence,” said attorney Tony Lombardo, who is representing Heuer. “The only thing it will do is cost money.”

The ballot measure, sponsored by Public Water Now, would require the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District to study the idea of acquiring Cal Am’s Monterey system. It would also require the district to begin condemnation proceedings if the analysis finds that a takeover is “feasible.”

Monterey County Counsel Charles McKee said the dispute is between Heuer and Public Water Now.

“The registrar and the county will, of course, comply with any court order resulting from this case,” McKee told The Pine Cone. “It is important that any decision is made within the time frame necessary to print and mail ballots.”

Because the Measure J title is “false and misleading,” Heuer is requesting that a judge order Valenzuela to change the name before the Voter Information Guide is mailed out ahead of the Nov. 6 election.

He is also asking that the voter guide also include just the language of the proposed takeover initiative, instead of the proponents’ claims about all the benefits it would bring — language Lombardo called “puffery.”

“State law says you can’t put language in the voter guide or on the ballot that’s false or misleading,” Lombardo continued.

Heuer, a member of the Monterey Peninsula Taxpayers Association, filed the suit as an individual. It names the water district, Pub-

lic Water Now and its director George Riley, and several other individuals as real parties in interest. A hearing has been scheduled for Aug. 29.

In 2014, Heuer sued the water district over the same title for a nearly identical initiative

by Public Water Now. Heuer prevailed when a judge concluded that the title was not impartial and he ordered it to be changed. Voters later rejected that ballot measure, as they have several other takeover initiatives over the years.

HOTLINE

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building official Neville Pereira said. “As we work to develop a better policy solution to this important issue, we want to be in touch with the community on all sides,” Pereira said.

The county continues work on refining an ordinance that would regulate — and permit some — vacation stays in the county. Pereira said the hotline will provide officials with valuable information when they craft those rules.

“Our policy must be enforceable,” Pereira added. “The hotline gives us a way of taking code enforcement into consideration, and

gives the community a chance to be heard.”

At the hearing to approve the hotline, supporters and opponents debated its merits. Some warned that opponents would use the system to report false claims simply because they don’t like the short term rentals, while others insisted the hotline is necessary to counter the negative impacts of the industry.

Fifth District Supervisor Mary Adams, who called for a motion to approve the hotline, said it will help county officials identify what she called, “the bad actors.” “We want to focus on those who are having having loud noise, and traffic, parking and trash issues,” Adams explained.

Complaints about short term rentals can be made by calling (831) 900-4441 or visiting www.hostcompliance.com/tips.

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