

The Carmel Pine Cone

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TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

PG&E plans for gas pipeline meet resistance

By MARY SCHLEY

REPRESENTATIVES FROM the utility company that was fined millions of dollars for accidentally blowing up a house in Carmel four years ago didn't receive a warm reception Monday evening, when they presented plans to install

nearly a mile of new, 6-inch pipeline along busy and congested streets on the north side of town.

The "distribution line" would be buried in a 4,900-foot-long, 4-foot-deep trench dug along North San Antonio from the Pebble Beach Gate to Fourth Avenue, east on Fourth, and north on San Carlos and Camino del Monte to the city limits near the Junipero Serra statue. The new line, which would have no direct connections to properties in Carmel, would be installed a block at the time and take six months to complete.

Speaking for PG&E, Joe Foster explained the pipe will increase capacity in the gas system. "We looked at modeling over the last few years, looked at forecasting for the future, and our engineers determined a new 6-inch line needed to go in," he said. The line would follow the route of an existing steel gas pipe that will continue to operate. Foster described it as "the safest and least impactful route possible."

He noted the company has "had a lot of conversations about safety with the city," since the 2014 explosion that was blamed, in part, on PG&E's incomplete maps of gas lines and lack of critical records. "We go into this with safety being our No. 1 priority," he said.

See PIPE page 13A

Investigation: Dallas' behavior was bad, but not unlawful

Attorneys say they also found 'conspiracy' against mayor

By MARY SCHLEY

MAYOR STEVE Dallas made vulgar and boorish comments, and engaged in inappropriate behavior, according to a three-month investigation of 21 complaints of sexual harassment made by a half-dozen people. But he didn't do anything illegal, city attorney Glen Mozingo said during a packed meeting at city hall Wednesday morning.

And, in a bizarre twist, Mozingo reported Dallas was the victim of a conspiracy. "We were informed by not one, but two, individuals that there was a conspiracy to carry out an attack on the mayor," he said. "An individual from Salinas was brought into the City of Carmel, and was paid \$100" to start a fight with the mayor "while the others took photos."

The alleged assault occurred at Mission Ranch in February 2017, when a man walked up behind Dallas and pinned his arms. The mayor swung around, at which point someone separated them and escorted Dallas outside.

"When we conclude that we have enough evidence to present to the Monterey County District Attorney's Office, that matter will be turned over for prosecution," Mozingo said.

Reprimand, not resignation

Independent investigator Irma Moisa addressed 21 accusations in her 217-page report, and while some were substantiated, none constituted sexual harassment that would make the city criminally or civilly liable — the question Mozingo said the investigation set out to answer.

He dryly described seven incidents confirmed through accounts of the complainants, witnesses, and the mayor's own admissions. Among them, Moisa discovered he referred to a friend as a "fluffer," introduced a male friend by saying he only dates "attractive women," made comments with "potential sexual connotations," put his hands on a woman's shoulders while she was sitting at a table with others, asked another woman how her "love life" was, and pointed out a spill on her blouse. Dallas was also accused of leering at the woman's breasts, but Moisa concluded that her "animus for the mayor in all probability colored her impression of the

See DALLAS page 8A



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

PG&E wants to carve up city streets to install a gas line — an idea the city council wasn't hot on at a hearing Monday. But the work tying up traffic on Ocean Avenue this week (above) is for a new sewer main. See the story on page 8A.

Panetta, Monning and Stone criticize DOJ lawsuit

By KELLY NIX

A LAWSUIT filed by the United States Department of Justice Tuesday challenging three of California's immigration laws will help reduce crime and make citizens safer, according to United States Attorney General Jeff Sessions. But Congressman Jimmy Panetta and other legislators contend the opposite will happen, and the DOJ suit will actually

"undermine" the ability of police to "protect and serve."

The DOJ, which sued California Tuesday, says the state's sanctuary laws — including SB54, which prohibits use of state or local resources to help federal immigration authorities deport illegal immigrants — "intentionally obstruct and discriminate against" the enforcement of federal immigration laws.

"As a result, the Justice Department is seeking to permanently enjoin these state statutes, which are contrary to federal law and interfere with federal immigration authorities' ability to carry out their lawful duties," according to the DOJ.

'Political stunt'

Gov. Jerry Brown called the DOJ lawsuit a "political stunt," and said it amounts to "basically going to war" with California, a state he boasted is the "engine" of the American economy.

"At a time of unprecedented political turmoil, Jeff Sessions has come to California to further divide and polarize America," Brown told the press Tuesday in a news release. "Jeff, these political stunts may be the norm in Washington, but they don't work here."

See DOJ page 10A

Vacation renters booted from MCCVB

By KELLY NIX

A DECISION by Monterey County's tourism bureau to expel vacation rental agencies from its membership roster two months ago is "short sighted" and possibly "illegal," according to a spokeswoman for one of the local short-term rental agencies affected by the move.

In January, the Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau decided to expel members that offer local vacation rentals. In response to the move, Debra Ryll with Monterey Bay Vacation Rentals, one of those businesses, wrote a terse letter this week to the tourism bureau's president and CEO, Tammy Blount.

"The board's decision is counterproductive and grossly unfair, if not illegal," Ryll said.

Such rentals are a big part of the local economy and generate millions of dollars a year in transient occu-

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FRESNO MAN SUES PINE CONE, KSBW, WEEKLY FOR LIBEL

PINE CONE STAFF REPORT

A MAN who is being sued by the California Attorney General for allegedly diverting money from two charities for personal use has filed his own \$20 million lawsuit against The Carmel Pine Cone for defamation and libel after the newspaper published an article about the attorney general's accusations.

Matthew G. Gregory is also suing KSBW-TV and Monterey County Weekly, which carried their own reports about claims from Attorney General Xavier Becerra that money donated to charities run by Gregory and his family was used for personal expenses, including shopping trips to Victoria's Secret.

Gregory, who operates the Wounded Warriors Support Group and Central Coast Equine Rescue and Retirement, contends in a Feb. 27 lawsuit filed in Fresno County Superior Court that The Pine Cone published a "false, defaming and misleading" article that caused "serious damage" to his reputation. The complaint also lists Pine Cone reporter Kelly Nix as a defendant.

Gregory is asking the court to require the newspaper to print a retraction, issue a public apology, remove an article published in April 2017 and all of its links from the internet, and pay him more than \$20 million. The Pine Cone's story included a summary of the attorney general's claims against Gregory and his charities, and extensively quoted Gregory's denials of those claims.

Gregory is being represented in the lawsuit against The Pine Cone by his daughter, attorney Gina D. Gregory, who is also a defendant in the attorney general's lawsuit, along with

See LIBEL page 15A

Diane Wolcott, painter of whimsy, dies at 87



Her folk-art style brought her many admirers — not only because of its child-like sense of wonder, but because Diane Wolcott almost always included a tiny nun in her paintings. Above, "Our Last Chance," painted in 2012. See obituary, page 9A.

RENTERS

From page 1A

pancy tax for local cities. Ryll said she believes the visitors bureau suspended her group's membership at the behest of hotels, which view vacation rentals as formidable competition.



DIANNE ROBERTA LORMANS
 October 26, 1938 – March 1, 2018
 Grass Valley, California

Dianne Roberta Lormans passed away on March 1, 2018 at home, Grass Valley, CA, after battling 27+ years of an illness.

Dianne and her husband John met and lived in Carmel, CA many years. They moved their family to Grass Valley in 1979. Dianne worked as a bus driver in Carmel, and then as a technician at Grass Valley Group.

John and Dianne were married 44 years. They are now dancing in heaven. She leaves behind 4 sons, 3 daughters, 16 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.

In response to questions from The Pine Cone about Ryll's letter, Blount said the bureau's primary goal is to drive business growth by increasing overnight visitation at lodging properties that collect and remit taxes.

The bureau, Blount said, consulted with its legal counsel before it changed the bylaws — "as we always do when making edits to that document."

"Owners, operators, and promoters of vacation rentals, condos, single-family homes, individual apartment units, or any lodging facility or activity not authorized by local ordinance or state statute are not eligible for regular non-voting membership with the MCCVB," she said of the bureau's new stance.

The organization has contacted five companies that don't fall in line with its mission and offered refunds for membership dues that have already been paid, Blount said. Ryll said Monterey Bay Vacation Rentals has not yet been refunded.

The bureau's position on vacation rentals follows a wave of local opposition against such rentals, which have long been banned in residential parts of Carmel. Pacific Grove allows them with conditions, although the P.G. Chamber of Commerce opposes them, and there is a petition to qualify an initiative that seeks to "preserve and protect Pacific Grove's residential character" by banning and phasing out existing short-term rentals in residential districts, except those in the city's coastal zone.

More than 60 percent of Monterey Bay Vacation Rentals' 100-plus furnished rentals are monthly rentals "which don't compete with hotels, inns" and bed and breakfasts, maintained Ryll, who added that many of its guests have said they wouldn't stay in the Monterey area at all if vacation rentals weren't an option.

"Short-term vacation rentals offer a choice that is sometimes preferred by families and groups of friends who want the comfort of a home, and a kitchen where they can cook some of their meals," she said.

The visitors bureau also kicked out the Monterey County

Vacation Rental Alliance. President Jan Leasure said the "vast majority" of its rentals are for 30 days or more, "so I fail to see how that interferes with anybody's business."

Asked whether the organization is considering suing the Monterey County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Leasure said, "We are not there yet."

"We found [the MCCVB's] actions inexplicable; that an organization whose mission it is to bring visitors to the county would want to drop members who do that exact thing," she said.

Wharf Marketplace to close after just five years

AFTER OPENING in 2013 to much fanfare, the Wharf Marketplace underwent several changes, including expanding its wine offerings and replacing its fresh seafood counter with ready-to-eat salad offerings. The fresh produce came from Tanimura and Antle, which operates the shop — at least until March 15, when it's going to close permanently, according to a posting on its Facebook page March 8.

The posting said simply, "Thank you for your business and loyalty," and then gave the closing date, along with a 20-percent-off coupon. When it first launched, it was envisioned as something approximating the Ferry Terminal market in San Francisco — albeit on a much smaller scale — showcasing local producers like Acme Coffee and Schoch cheese.

The shop is located in a historic Southern Pacific Train station near Wharf No. 2. The Pine Cone emailed Tanimura and Antle to find out why the shop was closing but did not receive a response Thursday afternoon.

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To foster or adopt an older cat, contact Golden Oldies at www.gocatrescue.org, 831.200.9700 or goldenoldiescats@gmail.com.



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California Skin Institute would like to inform you that Dr. Christina Wahlgren has recently changed her name to Dr. Christina Bolante. Dr. Bolante specializes in medical, surgical and cosmetic dermatology and has immediate openings for new patients.

Dr. Bolante is a board-certified dermatologist who received her medical degree from the University of Washington, and completed her residency in dermatology at the University of Pittsburgh.

Dr. Bolante is an active member of the American Academy of Dermatology and the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery.

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