

The Monterey Peninsula is home to hundreds of small businesses, including many owned and run by dynamic, entrepreneurial women whose success stories are an inspiration to us all.

Read about a few of them in this issue of The Carmel Pine Cone

The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 104 No. 14

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

April 6-12, 2018

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

COUNCIL OVERRULES COMMISSION, OKS BIKE RENTALS

By MARY SCHLEY

A BICYCLE shop on Mission Street received permission from the city council Tuesday evening to rent out up to 20 bikes.

The vote reversed a planning commission decision last month not to approve a permit for the rentals after some com-

missioners said they thought Carmel's streets were too dangerous for rented bikes.

But shortly after the planning commission hearing, Mayor Steve Dallas and councilwoman Carrie Theis decided the city council should take up the issue — and it came before them this week with a recommendation from the city's senior planner, Marnie Waffle, that the rentals be approved.

Waffle said the planning commission's denial "was based on general concerns regarding bicycle safety and was not based on any specific issue with this particular application." The municipal code allows bike rentals but, "general safety concerns would essentially preclude any business from offering bicycle rentals in Carmel."

Jennifer Blevins and Martin Watson, owners of Mad Dogs & Englishmen bike shop, appeared before the council at the April 3 meeting and said their business meets all the city's rules and requirements.

"We met all of the conditions, and it took us quite a lot of

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Homeowners get reprieve for 'illegal' retaining wall

By MARY SCHLEY

A RETAINING wall, stone pillars and a fence that were built without permits on city property in front of a home on Torres north of First more than two decades ago should all be removed, planner Catherine Tarone told the city council Tuesday evening, because allowing them to stay would amount to giving public property to a private homeowner.

But council members worried that removing the retaining wall would allow the dirt and plants behind it to wash down Torres, as homeowner Nancy Ann Budden, a sediment geologist (and the director of the Naval Postgraduate School's Defense Counter Terrorism Technology Office), said it would.

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PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

The owners of this house on Torres Street have to remove this fence and pillars, but can keep a retaining wall.

PWN says petition has enough signatures

By KELLY NIX

THE ACTIVISTS behind an effort they say will "achieve affordable, sustainable water" for the Monterey Peninsula by turning Cal Am into a government-run company announced Tuesday they had collected enough signatures to put the takeover idea before voters.

At a rally in front of Monterey Peninsula Water Management District offices, members of the group Public Water Now said they collected 11,405 signatures, nearly twice the number required to put the item on the November ballot.

For the past six months, Public Water Now has circulated a petition asking voters to require the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District to determine whether a Cal Am takeover would be financially feasible, and if it is, to begin the takeover process. A government-run water system, the group claims, would mean lower water rates.

The group's announcement that it obtained far more signatures than needed comes a couple weeks after a Cal Am mailer urged customers to withdraw their names from the Public Water Now petition. Cal Am contended that the water group

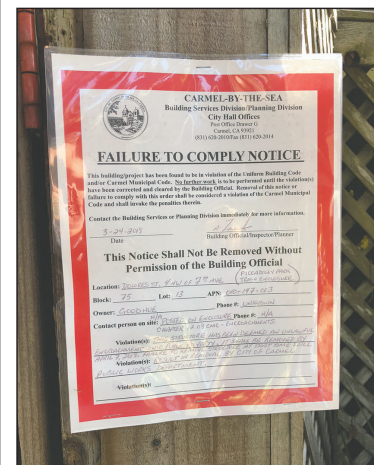
See **PETITION** page 17A

Court halts city plan to demolish trash enclosure

By MARY SCHLEY

A JUDGE issued a temporary restraining order against the City of Carmel Thursday to prevent public works crews from tearing down a fenced garbage area that was built on

the side of Cantinetta Luca — taking up 110 square feet in Piccadilly Park next door — in 2006. In February, the city council gave owner David Fink 60 days to remove the trash enclosure, but Fink has argued that the city didn't object when it was built, and his restaurant can't stay open without it, because there's nowhere else to put the trash.



A city-issued red tag orders restaurant owner David Fink to remove his trash enclosure by April 7.

On March 24, code enforcement officer Al Fasulo put up a notice declaring the fenced area illegal and advising that public works

would demolish it if Fink hadn't done so by the April 7 deadline.

The two sides have been at loggerheads since the planning department told him he needs permission to have the trash area on park property, even though it was drawn on the plans that officials signed off on 12 years ago. It came to planners' attention when they were reviewing his proposal to build a condo on top of the restaurant.

The condo was approved by the planning commission last fall, but the council voted not to allow Fink to keep the garbage area in the park, as that would in effect be giving him public land. Throughout the process, Fink has contended that Mayor Steve Dallas and councilwoman Carolyn Hardy, who wanted to challenge the condo's approval, are biased against him. The encroachment was denied 3-1, with Dallas, Hardy

See **TRASH** page 15A

Total ban on STRs not happening, county official tells Big Sur locals

By CHRIS COUNTS

A GROUP of Big Sur residents told county officials March 27 they want short-term rentals banned in Big Sur, and they said a longstanding local land use plans adopted by the California Coastal Commission backs up their view.

"This plan has served the coast for nearly 40 years," opponent Tim Green testified. "It has saved this place."

Supporters, though, said vacation stays should be permitted in Big Sur — and probably will be, because the current generation of coastal commission officials have said that's what they want. "You had better work really closely with the coastal commission so they don't say, 'You have to go back to the drawing

board,'" supporter C.W. Freedman warned those who are pushing for a ban.

County planner Jacqueline Onciano, meanwhile, urged residents to come up with a compromise. She said an outright ban on vacation rentals is not realistic.

"A prohibition is not going to work," Onciano added.

The statements were made at a land use committee meeting at the Big Sur Lodge, one in a series of meetings hosted by county officials as they seek comments from the public about an ordinance they are developing that will regulate — and permit some — short term rentals in unincorporated areas like Big Sur and Carmel Valley.

See **RENTALS** page 14A

Mary Schley honored at city hall



Mayor Steve Dallas surprises Mary Schley with a proclamation at the city council meeting Tuesday night, congratulating her on 20 years as a reporter with The Carmel Pine Cone. For most of that time, she has "attended more city meetings and listened to more public comments" than anyone else in town and become "the most important person at The Pine Cone," the proclamation said.

PHOTO/KERRY BELSER



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RENTALS

From page 1A

In contrast to last week's hearing in Carmel Valley — where supporters were at least as numerous as opponents — most residents who spoke in Big Sur are opposed to short-term rentals. Many say that the Big Sur Land Use Plan, which dates to the early 1980s, requires the county to "protect existing affordable housing in the Big Sur coastal area from loss due to deterioration, conversion or any other reason," and limits visitor serving accommodations "to specific areas along Highway 1."

'Accessible to many'

But supporters contend the land use plan also endorses visitation — and, hence, vacation stays. They refer to a passage in the land use plan that reads, "the area should be accessible to as many as can be accommodated."

Several opponents testified that short-term rentals are driving long-term employees out of Big Sur and forcing those who remain to commute long distances to work.

"If you did a survey, you would be surprised how many people are driving to work from Watsonville and Prunedale," opponent Marcus Foster said.

But Freedman said property owners shouldn't be expected to house local employees. "It's the responsibility of employers to build housing," he countered.

Defending vacation stays, Lowell Strauss testified he formerly rented out his home "once a month to families," and his neighbors didn't complain. But someone did, and he said he was fined \$14,000 by the county as a result.

Is a 40-year-old coastal plan in favor of short-term rentals, or against them?

Strauss also said that he's been harassed by opponents — and even called a "carpetbagger" during a recent trip to the Big Sur Post Office.

Several locals suggested limiting short-term rentals to properties that are accessible directly from public roads. John Handy, who serves on the South Coast Land Use Advisory Committee, called access to them along private roads "the main issue."

Handy suggested allowing each local road association an opportunity to decide by a majority vote if vacation stays should be allowed along it.

Proponent Lori Kempt, meanwhile, said she believes many of the concerns associated with the industry can be resolved through education.

"As someone who wants to see this community in harmony, I believe education could play a big part of this process," explained Kempt, who said a class on vacation rentals should be required for operators and code enforcement officers.

While the county is on track to send a vacation rental ordinance to the board of supervisors for approval sometime this summer, opponent Mike Caplin urged county officials to wait until an update of the Big Sur Land Use Plan is completed. But county officials said that process will take too long, so they are moving the ordinance forward.

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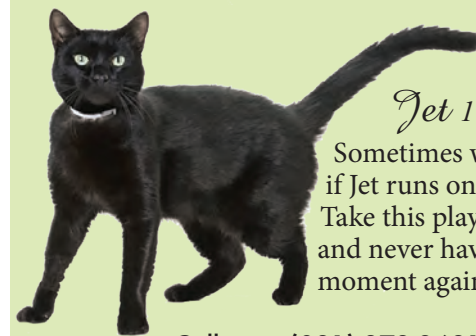


The SPCA for Monterey County

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