

## BIG SUR BLAZE DESTROYS GARRAPATA HOUSE

By CHRIS COUNTS

KNOWN BY its neighbors as the “Long House,” a home located in Garrapata Canyon burned to the ground Wednesday after overhead power lines were blown into each other, sending sparks raining down on a pile of flammable debris.

Mid-Coast Volunteer Fire Brigade Chief Cheryl Goetz told The Pine Cone that her agency was notified of the fire



PHOTO/TOM DEYERLE

Fire rages through a house in Garrapata Canyon March 7 after power lines touched in heavy winds. Two people were inside but escaped without injury. Firefighters kept the blaze from spreading into the steep hillside’s dense brush.

just before 3 p.m. Tuesday. She and two other Mid-Coast volunteers responded to the blaze, where they were soon met by a Cal-Fire crew from the Carmel Highlands and volunteer firefighters from Big Sur. Unfortunately, the firefighters could do nothing to save the house, which was already engulfed in flames. The occupants of the home — Susie Barnett, Jeffrey Downs and several dogs — escaped with no injuries.

While the house was destroyed, firefighters were able to contain an adjacent brush fire, which scorched about a quarter-acre and could have easily spread through the area’s steep terrain, which is covered with dense vegetation. “We were lucky,” Goetz said.

Aiding the firefighters were neighbors, who wasted no time moving into action.

“They grabbed garden hoses to help fight the vegetation fire and keep it from spreading,” Goetz reported.

She also said resident Matt Borek played a key role in suppressing the fire by pumping water from a creek. “He did a great job helping us out,” she said.

It is unclear how much of an effect high winds — or the previous night’s light rain — had on the fire. Goetz said there were 20 mph gusts of wind in the canyon at the time of the incident, but “the house was located back in an area protected from the wind.”

The fire served as a reminder of the risks that exist in rural neighborhoods throughout Big Sur and Carmel Valley. To better protect homes, Goetz suggested that residents be well prepared to help put out a fire.

“You can have a 10,000-gallon water tank on your property, but if we can’t access it, we can’t get water to

See **FIRE** page 9A

## Burnett has big campaign cash lead

By MARY SCHLEY

IN COLLECTING funds to help pay for their runs for office in the April 10 election, mayoral candidate Jason Burnett has far surpassed challenger Rich Pepe, while the only incumbent running for council, Ken Talmage, has outpaced challengers Victoria Beach, Bob Profeta and Tom Leverone. The candidates filed their first set of financial statements at city hall last week.

### ■ Jason Burnett

Burnett’s considerable war chest includes \$19,616 in contributions collected in 2011 after he announced his intention to run for mayor, in addition to \$8,102 in cash raised between Jan. 1 and Feb. 25 this year.

His most generous supporters included Gordon and Ronda Eubanks of Pebble Beach, who each gave \$2,000. Edwina Bent of Monterey, Jane Dunaway of Carmel, Wade Randlett of San Francisco, Joanne Storkan of P.B. and Stanley Meresmen of Carmel each contributed \$1,000.

Other notable supporters included Julie Packard, his aunt and executive director of the Monterey Bay Aquarium, who donated \$750, as well as restaurateur Firok Shield (\$500), former councilwoman Barbara Livingston (\$200), former Mayor Charlotte Townsend (\$100), former Pacific Grove Mayor Dan Cort (\$500), former councilman David Maradei (\$200), attorney Skip Lloyd (\$250), former Assemblyman and current Santa Cruz County treasurer Fred Keeley (\$100), Monterey County Supervisor Jane Parker (\$500), architect Safwat Malek (\$500), Talmage (\$250), former Nielsen Bros. Market owner Merv Sutton (\$100), gallery owner Bill Karges (\$500), CRA member Roberta Miller (\$500), Robert

See **FUNDS** page 9A

## Judges asked to declare sexual preference

By KELLY NIX

IF YOUR employer asked you to disclose whether you’re LGB or even T, it would be alarming, if not lawsuit-inviting. But those very questions were posed to the state’s nearly 1,700 judges this year.

For the past six years, the Judicial Council has asked judges to voluntarily provide information about their gender, race and ethnicity — data some believe is necessary for the public to know to be reassured about the diversity of the judiciary.

## Preservationists want P.B. ‘mid-century treasure’ saved

By KELLY NIX

A HOUSE in Pebble Beach designed by one of the world’s most influential modern architects is at the center of an effort to prevent it from being demolished.

Known as the Connell House, the 4,124-square-foot home at 1170 Signal Hill Road in Pebble Beach is the creation of celebrated architect Richard Neutra.

The owner of the 1958 house — software CEO Massy Mehdipour — has asked the county planning department for permission to raze the building and construct a 11,933-square-foot, three-story home in its place.

But Mehdipour’s plans are being fought by a group of people who contend the home shouldn’t be demolished.

Among them are Neutra’s sons, Raymond and Dion Neutra, who argue the house is an important example of modernist architecture and exemplifies their father’s approach to design.

“It would be a great tragedy if the only authentic example of a house designed by Richard Neutra standing in Monterey County were to be demolished,” according to Dion Neutra,

See **HOME** page 7A

But this year, judges were also asked if they were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, questions required by Senate Bill 182 authored by State Sen. Ellen Corbett, a Democrat from San Leandro, and sponsored by gay rights group Equality California. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed the bill in 2011.

“We sponsored the bill because ultimately, we believe that the courts are the most effective when they represent the diversity of the communities they serve,” Rebekah Orr, spokeswoman for San Francisco-based Equality California told The Pine Cone Tuesday.

Of the 1,678 judges surveyed about their sexual orientation and gender identity, 969 (57.7 percent) identified themselves as heterosexual, 19 said they’re lesbian, 17 picked “gay” and nobody said he was bisexual.

See **JUDGES** page 10A

## Pine Cone forum Tuesday

ABSENTEE BALLOTS in the April 10 Carmel municipal election are set to go out in the mail next week, just in time for the third and final candidates forum set for Tuesday, March 13, from 7 to 9 p.m. in Carpenter Hall at Sunset Center. The Carmel Pine Cone is hosting the panel discussion, which will be moderated by publisher Paul Miller and will feature mayoral candidates Jason Burnett and Rich Pepe, and council contenders Ken Talmage, Victoria Beach, Tom Leverone and Bob Profeta.

Readers, voters and anyone else interested in the race are encouraged to email questions in advance to Miller at [paul@carmelpinecone.com](mailto:paul@carmelpinecone.com). Questions will also be taken during the event. Carpenter Hall is accessible from Mission Street south of Eighth Avenue.

## Council asks architect to tweak beach bathrooms

By MARY SCHLEY



RENDERING/CARVER + SCHICKENTANZ

A design for permanent beach bathrooms has them lowered into the ground for a low profile, but some worry that could expose them to high surf.

THE YEARS-LONG effort to construct permanent bathrooms in place of the porta-potties at the south end of Carmel Beach took another step forward Tuesday night — maybe. City council members asked architect Rob Carver, who was hired in 2009 to design the facilities, to make them smaller to help reduce costs and address various concerns.

Portable toilets have been in place at Santa Lucia and Scenic Road since 1996, and the Local Coastal Program adopted by the city and the coastal commission in 2004 calls for their replacement with permanent facilities.

As drawn by Carver, the concrete and stone building would be sunken four feet

See **TWEAKED** page 9A