



# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Dog perishes in P.G. house fire



PHOTO/JAMES COOPER  
Monterey firefighters use a chain saw to cut through the roof of a home where an office caught fire Tuesday afternoon. The residents weren't home, but their pets were. See page 7A.

## 'ARTISAN FOOD EXPERIENCE' COMES TO SCREECHING HALT

By MARY SCHLEY

THE RESOUNDING negative reaction from downtown merchants to the idea of shutting down Ocean Avenue at any time for any sort of regular outdoor market prompted Carmel City Councilwoman Victoria Beach to say at a meeting Monday that she and a committee researching the idea would come up with other ways to boost business in the city.

Many of the roughly 60 business people who attended the July 16 discussion at city hall came to voice their displeasure with the prospect of closing a few blocks of Ocean Avenue and side streets for a market, named the "Carmel Artisan Food Experience," that would be held every Thursday afternoon and evening. They were reacting to extensive market guidelines drafted by Beach and a committee appointed by Mayor Jason Burnett to brainstorm on possible outdoor events, as well as to the fact the city announced it was "seeking a qualified manager to create and operate an outdoor artisan fresh and prepared food market in the downtown district in a manner consistent with the proposed market guidelines and in compliance with all applicable rules and regulations," and officials were interviewing candidates.

But Beach said their concerns were premature, and that they were responding to misinformation and preconceived notions. "There's just one main idea here, and that is to help downtown merchants and do something interesting to bring people to town to enliven businesses," she said. "This is very far from a done deal, whatever it is that you're imagining is happening."

Beach said the mayor's committee bandied about the idea of an outdoor market that would showcase downtown, and that food was a theme because "everybody's got to eat," though it could evolve into another sort of event altogether.

See **MARKET** page 15 in the Real Estate Section

## Monterey County accuses Marina Coast of bribery, fraud over defunct water project

By KELLY NIX

IN A scathing pair of claims filed this week, attorneys for Monterey County accuse the Marina Coast Water District of conspiring to misappropriate and misuse confidential information to defraud the county water agency and sabotage the now-defunct regional desalination project.

In nearly identical claims issued July 16, Monterey County and its Water Resources Agency accuse Marina Coast of entering into "secret agreements" with former county water board director Steve Collins to funnel money to Collins through the consulting company that eventually landed a \$28 million contract to manage the \$400 million regional project, which collapsed.

Collins, who was paid \$160,000 for work with RMC,

### Ratepayers' agency backs Cal Am's desal plan

#### ■ Calls it 'sole viable project'

By KELLY NIX

A STATE agency charged with looking out for the interests of utility companies' customers has come out in favor of California American Water's new water supply project.

In a July 9 document submitted to the California Public Utilities Commission, an attorney for its Department of Ratepayer Advocates said the group "supports the consideration" of Cal Am's Monterey Peninsula Water Supply Project, a \$370 million plan that includes a desalination

See **RATEPAYERS** page 8A

received money from Marina Coast to "secure his favor and manipulate the public approval process for the regional desalination project," according to the claims, signed by senior deputy county counsel Susan Blitch.

The county indicates it's not required by law to file a claim but did so "to deter any argument to the contrary." The claims will likely be followed by one or more lawsuits against Marina Coast.

The claims come after Marina Coast filed its own 23-page claim against Monterey County and its Water

See **FRAUD** page 9A

## Holman building hotel faces five-letter hurdle

### ■ W-a-t-e-r

By KELLY NIX

RENEWED PLANS to transform the historic Holman Building into a seven-story, 230-room hotel are once again bringing hope for revitalization of a moribund part of downtown Pacific Grove.

To get his long-sought hotel plan for the Holman Building in Pacific Grove off the drawing board, businessman Nader Agha is calling for a ballot measure Nov. 6 to approve the zoning changes the project would need, and has partnered with veteran Texas hotel developer Drake Leddy to give it credibility.

A downtown anchor business, such as a hotel, would create dozens of jobs, increase sales at nearby businesses, and

See **HOLMAN** page 9A

## CITY'S CHECK REGISTER IS WHERE IT ALL ADDS UP

### ■ How the city spends your money

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY of Carmel shelled out \$440,114.36 in tax dollars last month for lawyers, water and power, pest control in public buildings, and dozens of other expenses, large and small. In April, the total was \$813,715.36, and in May, it was \$507,271.45.

A register showing checks written during the previous month is presented to the city council for approval at its

regular monthly meeting, allowing council members and the public to see exactly where their dollars are going in a town that operates on a \$13.4 million annual budget.

Utilities take up a substantial chunk of the funds. In June, the city wrote checks totaling \$3,490.74 to AT&T for telephone services, \$7,135.35 to California American Water, \$1,406.44 to Nextel Communications (also for telephone services) and \$7,813.05 to Pacific Gas & Electric,

See **CHECKS** page 27A

## Footbridge to cost \$49K but could have been \$70K

By MARY SCHLEY

THE MUCH used footbridge at the top of Mission Trail Nature Preserve will be replaced for \$48,770, the Carmel City Council decided without discussion July 3, when it approved a contract with Stowe Engineering. Stowe came in the lowest of six contractors to bid on the replacement of the 35-year-old wooden bridge near the park's Mountain View Avenue entrance.



PHOTO/MARY SCHLEY

City taxpayers will foot the bill for replacing this footbridge in Mission Trail park. The city's bidding process resulted in a savings of \$21,000.

See **BRIDGE** page 8A