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Caltrans: Highway 1 reopening just six weeks away

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE EFFORT to clear the biggest slide in California history has been moving quicker than expected, and as a result, Caltrans announced this week that Highway 1 will reopen at Mud Creek sometime in late July.

For local businesses and visitors, the news is cause for celebration — previous estimates had the scenic route reopening in late September.

“It opens up an entire stretch of highway to a worldwide audience, and it means a ‘road to recovery’ for the many businesses that have been impacted by this massive slide,” Jim

Shivers of Caltrans told The Pine Cone.

The work was aided by clear skies.

“We’ve had very good weather to work with,” Shivers explained. “We did not have a severe rainy season, which allowed the construction team to make great progress.”

Shivers also noted that crews have working on the site seven days a week.

The highway at Mud Creek has been closed since May 20, 2017, when a massive slide dumped an estimated 5 million cubic yards of rock, dirt and debris on the pavement. The slide is located just south of Gorda near the Monterey County line, and for more than a year has blocked one of the world’s most famous oceanfront highways. It added about 15 acres of new land to the coast.

The new stretch of pavement will be located slightly below where the previous one was, with a series of embankments, berms, rocks, netting, culverts and other stabilizing material supporting the steep hillside. And to prevent coastal erosion, numerous large boulders have been placed at the toe of the slide to serve as a buffer between waves and the slope.

Until the highway is rebuilt, motorists can only access Big Sur by traveling south of Carmel along Highway 1, or by driving west of Highway 101 along Jolon and Nacimiento-Fergusson roads.

The project is expected to cost taxpayers \$40 million.

Dallas says he’ll seek second term

By MARY SCHLEY

SAYING HE’S changed his ways after allegations of sexual harassment were leveled against him, Mayor Steve Dallas announced this week that he plans to seek a second term. Dallas was elected to the city council in 2014 and then as mayor in 2016, and said he wants to continue building on the progress he and the city council have made during his term.

“I want to continue giving back to the village that I love,” he said.

A third-generation resident who attended Carmel High and has a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Golden Gate University, Dallas worked on residential projects with his mother, Mitzi, and was a member of the planning commission before running for election four years ago.

He said he wants to keep focusing on several pressing issues, including the remodel and expansion of the police station — “We haven’t touched that place in 50 years,” he said — and the Monterey Peninsula’s seemingly endless water problems. He serves on the mayors’ water group alongside the heads of other Peninsula cities.

Regarding the California Public Employees Retirement System, which pays retirees through contributions and investments that have fallen well short of targets — and therefore saddled its member cities, counties and districts with bigger bills — Dallas wants to figure out how to refinance some of those liabilities.

On Measure D, the 1 percent sales tax that voters approved in 2012 and which expires in 2022, he said he wants to ask voters to extend the tax, perhaps for another 20 years.

“Then we can work on CalPERS, building maintenance and other issues,” he said.

Flanders Mansion, the deteriorating Tudor-style house that was built in the 1920s and purchased along with the surrounding land that’s now Mission Trail park in 1972, continues to



Steve Dallas

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PHOTO/JOHN MADONNA, COURTESY CALTRANS

An aerial view of the Mud Creek project, with the existing highway approaching from both ends, shows the extensive work that’s been done to stabilize the hillside, including large berms to control rainwater.

DOG SURVIVES MAULING BY TRIO OF GREAT DANES

By CHRIS COUNTS

AFTER A brutal attack by three great Danes in Pebble Beach, a one-year-old German shorthaired pointer named Emma is trying to regain her health.

Emma and her owners, Gordon McCall and his wife Molly, were on a walk in the Beach Club parking lot near Stillwater Cove June 10 when they were surprised by the great Danes, which Gordon McCall said were unleashed and weighed more than 100 pounds each. The incident happened about 6:30 p.m.

McCall said it quite windy at the time, and he and wife couldn’t hear the dogs come up from behind. He described the attack as “violent” and “unprovoked.” “They came out of nowhere,” he said.

In response, the McCalls desperately tried to protect Emma against the aggressive dogs.

“Molly was able to fend one off by hitting it with her sandals,” McCall said. “But the other one was seriously trying to

kill Emma. I was able to lift her up to my shoulder, but in the course of doing so, one of the great Danes latched onto her stomach with a serious bite. After several punches to its head, I was able to get the great Dane off of her.”

Emma was treated for her injuries at Pet Specialists in Monterey.

“Emma is stitched up with tubes coming out of her, but it appears that she is on the mend, convalescing at home on meds for the next two weeks,” McCall reported. “We are hoping that this trauma will not negatively affect her as she grows

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Grand jury targets P.G.’s handling of failed hotel

By KELLY NIX

THE CITY of Pacific Grove was “sloppy” and ill-prepared in its handling of a proposed luxury hotel in the American Tin Cannery, and the city manager’s cozy relationship with a subcontractor for the project created the appearance of a conflict of interest, according to a report released by the Monterey County Grand Jury this week.

In an 18-page report rich with alleged missteps by the city, the panel found that Pacific Grove — in pursuit of the luxury hotel development known as Project Bella — lacked adequate procedures to account for employee time spent on the project and track documents.

“A lack of appropriate controls on the part of the city administration contributed to unreimbursed costs of more than \$101,402.47 to the city,” according to the report.

The city, the jury found, also failed to “follow standard

■ Want it moved back from street

By KELLY NIX

WITH QUESTIONS over the remodel and expansion of the Carmel police station, including concerns over setback, parking and landscaping, the planning commission asked the architect to make changes and bring them back for consideration.

Commissioners, who were tasked with making design recommendations to the city council for the \$1.9 million project, were primarily concerned about the impact of the proposed building on Junipero Street because it would extend all the way to the sidewalk on the west side.

While there was discussion over scaling back the building, the commission decided it liked the same project favored by most of the city council over a smaller, less expensive remodel.

The plan includes a new dispatch, evidence-processing and property rooms, as well as a utility room, offices, an ADA-compliant bathroom, and the relocation of the emergency operations center from the basement to the ground level.

But commissioner Christopher Bolton said the proposed building would be too “far forward,” which would make it difficult to screen it from the sidewalk.

“I don’t like this design,” Bolton said. “I think it

looms over the street.”

Commissioners Stephanie Locke and Judy Lehman agreed that the building needs to be moved back from the street.

“I don’t like the idea of this looming over the property line

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PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Crew from “Big Little Lies” unloading equipment for a shoot outside the Carmel police station Thursday. The station will be extensively remodeled soon — if the planning commission gets the changes it asked for this week.