

City will repair long-closed beach stairways

By MARY SCHLEY

CARMEL BEACH stairways wrecked by winter storm surges and high surf could soon be repaired, acting assistant city administrator Brandon Swanson said this week.

“We’re going to create a hit list of stairways we can fix ourselves or with a contractor, and issue our own permit,” he explained, which the California Coastal Commission has agreed to let the city do.

His confidence in the process — including being able to issue a permit and start work the next day — followed

a conversation last Thursday afternoon involving him, public works director Bob Harary, other city staff and the coastal commission’s local district supervisor, Katie Butler.

Above mean high tide line

“We had a really fruitful conversation, and she agrees with our interpretation that we can issue ourselves an emergency permit for projects above the mean high tide line,” Swanson said, noting that one of the commission’s

See STAIRS page 15A



PHOTOS/(LEFT) STEVE ABRAMS, (RIGHT) MARY SCHLEY

Winter waves and storms (left) battered several wooden staircases connecting Scenic Road and the beach, rendering them useless (right), but city officials believe they’ll be able to fix them soon.

HANSEL & GRETEL CAN HAVE 250-SQUARE-FOOT GARAGE

By MARY SCHLEY

THE OWNERS of the famous Hansel & Gretel cottages designed and built by Hugh Comstock on Torres Street can add a 250-square-foot detached garage, the Carmel Historic Resources Board decided Monday afternoon.

The swift decision struck a marked contrast with the board’s actions regarding a detached garage at another nearby Comstock cottage that required multiple hearings and arguments over its proposed 250-square-foot size before it was ultimately approved for 235 square feet.

Doll House

Unlike Breck and Carole Lutz’s ordeal up the street on Santa Fe, Michael and Roberta Voris’ experience Feb. 26 was smooth sailing, with consultant Meg Clovis concluding their proposed garage in the front setback of their 6,000-square-foot lot would comply with the Secretary

of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and principal planner Marnie Waffle recommending approval.

Waffle explained that the Hansel cottage, also known as The Doll House, was constructed 100 years ago by Comstock as a showroom for the Otsy Totsy rag dolls made by his wife, Mayotta Browne, while Gretel, built a year later, served as her office. They were added to the city’s inventory of historic buildings worthy of mandatory preservation in 2003.

Built in Comstock’s signature Storybook style, the

See GARAGE page 24A

Driver not found for a day after 400-foot plunge

By CHRIS COUNTS

A LOCAL man who is lucky to be alive was rescued Tuesday morning — some 35 hours after the vehicle he was driving plunged about 400 feet off Hurricane Point in Big Sur Sunday evening, according to Big Sur Fire Chief Matt Harris.

Harris said that the man, whose name was not released, was driving north on his way home from work when he somehow lost control. According to KSBW, he told rescuers he swerved to avoid deer. It was later confirmed he is a Pacific Grove resident who works at Post Ranch Inn, and he left the resort shortly after 11 p.m. “He never made it home and was reported as missing,” Harris explained.

‘Moderate injuries’

On Tuesday, Harris said the missing man’s friends and family used a drone to search for him. About a half-mile south of Hurricane Point, they found what they believed was his car over the edge of a cliff. While the man and his car were soon located nearby, the drone had found another wreck.

About 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, in response to a 911 call

Cal Am moves to toss takeover lawsuit

By KELLY NIX

CALIFORNIA AMERICAN Water this week fired back at the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District’s legal efforts to forcibly take over its local water system, but the head of the district said he believes Cal Am’s claims “don’t have much merit or purpose.”

On Monday, Cal Am filed a motion in Monterey County Superior Court arguing that the water district’s eminent domain lawsuit filed last December fails to meet fundamental legal requirements necessary to proceed with a utility acquisition and should be tossed out of court.

Lacking authority?

While the water district contends it could operate the system more efficiently and at a lower cost than Cal Am does, the company argued in the 14-page legal filing that the district doesn’t have the authority to become a water system owner.

“The district’s plan cannot legally proceed, however, because the district is not authorized to operate Cal Am’s water system,” according to the brief filed by the utility, which serves about 100,000 people. “The district is a special district created by the state Legislature, possessing only those specific powers conferred upon it by the Legislature.”

See CAL AM page 10A

Public tours of police station set for March 29

■ Registration, background check needed

By MARY SCHLEY

CITY OFFICIALS on Friday said tours of the Carmel police station and follow-up visits to Salinas P.D. will take place March 29 for those who want to get a closer look at the problems in the decades-old Junipero Street station and then explore a modern, high-tech facility. The exercise aims to help constituents better understand Carmel P.D.’s needs and the station’s shortcomings as the city council decides how to proceed with replacing it.

The tours will take place in small waves from 9:30 a.m. to noon in Carmel and from 1:30 p.m. onward in Salinas.

“The goal is for the public to gain an understanding of operational issues that need to be addressed through the police building project” that’s underway under the leadership of a city ad hoc committee comprising Mayor Dave

See TOUR page 12A



PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

Dozens of tourists walk by the Hansel & Gretel cottages every day. The historic property will soon get a new garage.



PHOTO/CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL

Video from a helicopter offers a birdseye view of the rescue of a motorist who drove off Hurricane Point and lived to tell about it.