



# The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 110 No. 24

<https://carmelpinecone.com>

June 14-20, 2024

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## Forest Service may require beach, camping reservations

### ■ Too much tourism is the problem

By CHRIS COUNTS

WHILE ITS busy state parks, private campgrounds and atmospheric hotels get lots of attention, Big Sur is mostly made up of land that's managed by the U.S. Forest Service. The federal agency has faced enormous challenges in recent years dealing with a spike in tourism at several popular sites in Big Sur. In response, the USFS has come up with an ambitious plan to rein things in, including requiring reservations to visit Pfeiffer Beach, camp in the backcountry and hike along the busy Pine Ridge Trail.

Created over a three-year process, the fed's Coastal Zone Visitor Use Management Plan makes it clear that it is only offering recommendations — not mandates.

"The document makes no decisions about the management of the Big Sur/South Coast, but rather provides a roadmap for potential future management actions," it says.

### Free-for-all

One of the plan's ideas is establishing a reservation system for hikers on the Pine Ridge Trail. By far Big Sur's most popular hiking route, the trail leads to four primitive backcountry campgrounds that can easily be reached in a day. As a result, the sites have long been plagued by litter and overuse.

Reservations could also be required for those who camp along public dirt roads — most of which are located in the southern part of Big Sur. The plan takes the strategy a step further by suggesting that car campers be limited to staying in designated spaces, as opposed to the existing

free-for-all.

Locals have long complained about the fire risks unregulated car camping poses along those dirt roads.

A reservation system could also be implemented for those who visit Pfeiffer Beach, according to the plan, which acknowledges that tourist traffic "presents a safety

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## River Inn deploys welcoming sculpture



PHOTO/COURTESY RIVER INN

To help make sure everybody knows the area is once again accessible to visitors, Big Sur's River Inn is honoring its history with 15 tons of sand. See page 12A.

## Surveillance camera debate over use, privacy

By MARY SCHLEY

ARE THE license-plate-reading cameras installed in Carmel over the last year a useful tool for catching criminals and finding missing people, or do they invade people's privacy and put their personal information at risk of being sold to the highest bidder? Councilwoman Alisandra Dramov and councilman Bobby Richards sought feedback from the public at their first ad hoc committee meeting on the subject Monday.

In April 2023, the Carmel City Council approved a contract with the Flock Safety company to put up two dozen wireless, solar-powered, license-plate-reading cameras throughout the city and replace the six installed by another provider along its perimeter several years earlier. The system captures time-stamped images of passing cars and

their license plates, including the number and state, along with the vehicle type and color. Unlike its predecessor, the Flock system alerts police within seconds when it identifies a stolen or wanted vehicle by automatically running the numbers through crime databases.

The collected data is stored in the cloud but only kept for 30 days, according to the city's agreement with the provider, and belongs to the city, not Flock.

### No discussion

Because much discussion had taken place during consideration of the initial camera installation in 2018, city officials decided to place the Flock contract on the consent agenda, city administrator Chip Rerig told attendees

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## Downtown breakfast spot gets 'Tonight Show' mention

By MARY SCHLEY

**Q:** WHERE does Jimmy Fallon like to get pancakes?  
**A:** Katy's Place.

The "Tonight Show" host recently visited the Monterey Peninsula to shoot an ad at the Pebble Beach Golf Links for the launch of a line of apparel, accessories and golf equipment, and he took a detour to downtown Carmel for breakfast.

In his show that aired Friday night, Fallon, who broadcasts from New York City, remarked that he'd last visited the Monterey Peninsula about 30 years ago to do stand-up at the now defunct Planet Gemini club when it was located near Cannery Row, and he would sleep in an apartment above it.

"I thought it was the best thing — it was showbiz," he said on the air June 7.

## Baron says he'll run for mayor

### ■ Race draws third strong candidate

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER SIX years on the Carmel City Council, Jeff Baron said this week he'll be running for mayor in November against incumbent Dave Potter and challenger Dale Byrne. During the last election two years ago, Potter ran unopposed.

Baron, who unseated an incumbent when he was first elected in 2018 after serving on the forest and beach commission, said the city needs new leadership in order to move forward on a number of efforts, including the police station project, which has been stuck in the discussion phase for more than seven years.

"I like the path we're on, but sometimes it just seems so slow and we lose ourselves in these discussions and seem to be unable to make decisions," he said Monday. "We stand around and the water rushes by us. It erodes what we are, and we just don't seem capable of protecting ourselves from that."

Rather than focus on his opponents, Baron said his campaign will emphasize his ability to lead.

"We need leaders who can find a balance between asking people what they think and then taking action," he said. "How do you draw that line? How many police station meetings do you have to have?"

### Staying cool

Ensuring constituents are informed and involved is critical, he said, "but at some point, you have to move forward, because the police station's going to fall down in an earthquake or a suspect will escape out the back," he said. "We accept the status quo, but a lot of times, the status quo results in the eroding of the things that we need to stay Carmel."

During his years on the council, Baron, who turned 60 in April, said he's learned not to lose his cool, to listen to his colleagues and the public, and to "take things with a grain of salt."

"When people say things you don't understand, ask," he said. "When I don't understand, I ask."

Doing so allows others in the conversation to explain

See BARON page 24A



PHOTO/THE TONIGHT SHOW STARRING JIMMY FALLON

"Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon talks up his Katy's Place pancakes during his June 7 broadcast and shows off the mug he "stole" from the Carmel restaurant.

After showing photos of himself at Fisherman's Wharf and the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Fallon shared a selfie he took in front of Katy's Place on Mission Street north of Sixth in downtown Carmel, followed by a pic of his pancake breakfast.

### VIP alert

"I went to this awesome place, like a diner breakfast place, called Katy's Place," he said. "Best pancakes." He also had a Katy's Place mug on his desk.

Later in the show, he joked that he stole a mug, because "she doesn't need it — she has a whole restaurant full of them," and also mentioned he didn't pay for his meal.

Restaurant owner Randy Burnett said he received a call the morning of May 24 that a VIP was coming in and was

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