

Pastor’s Rocky Point plan gets big thumbs up

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CALIFORNIA Coastal Commission unanimously approved what chair Caryl Hart called “a visionary plan” for the restoration and enhancement of Rocky Point and the surrounding property during its meeting in Morro Bay Friday. The expansive deal will undo extensive illegal work by the restaurant’s prior owners, vastly improve public access on the scenic and historic property, and ensure it remains open and accessible.

Reacting to the vote, property owner Patrice Pastor told The Pine Cone he was pleased with the outcome.

“The process was better than I expected, because everybody told me the coastal commission is terrible — that it’s impossible to discuss with them and it will take a really long time,” he said Tuesday during a call from France. “And in fact, they’re super practical.”

Lots of work

At the June 14 meeting, coastal planner Rob Modellmog gave a 30-plus-minute presentation on the history of Rocky Point and the Coastal Act violations committed by Peter and Grace Wang a few years after they purchased it in 2012 for \$4,550,000, as well as the solutions Pastor agreed to.

The 40-page agreement calls for removing eucalyptus and other invasive species,

restoring the entire bluff, taking out signs and lighting along the shoreline, recording public-access easements over 80 percent of the property, establishing a conservation easement, providing two dozen public parking spaces and eight vehicle charging stations, building four

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Dramatic satellite rescue



PHOTO/CHP

A hiker who was stuck in a tough spot near Pfeiffer Beach in Big Sur was rescued Sunday, and his cell phone played a key role in alerting authorities, despite no reception. See page 12A.

O’Neil throws hat into city council ring

By MARY SCHLEY

SINCE MOVING to Carmel full-time in 2021, David O’Neil has been heavily involved in local organizations, observed numerous city meetings and has undertaken the restoration of a historic cottage. This week, he announced he’s running for Carmel City Council.

“I’m trying to help people feel that they’re heard and understood,” he said of one of his primary motives for running. “I’m very big on good communication.”

Born in the small Sierra town of Mariposa, O’Neil, 46,

visited the coast frequently as a child with his family and developed a deep affection for the Monterey Peninsula, which he often traveled to while living in San Francisco. Since then, he and husband William have had homes in Southern California, on the Hawaiian island of Maui and in France, where they restored a historic chateau together.

When Covid hit, they decided to return to California to be closer to family, according to O’Neil. “We ended up living in this sweet little cottage in Carmel,” he said.

They had been considering buying in Montecito because they’d lived in the area before, but a move there by some members of England’s royal family put the community in the spotlight and drove up prices, he said, so they set their sights here.

Remodel bug

When a longtime Carmel family decided to sell their cottage at 12th and Casanova, the O’Neils put in a backup offer, and they ended up with the house — sight unseen.

“This is the first place I haven’t wanted to remodel, and I love remodeling, so that’s saying something,” he said.

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CHP OFFICER RESCUES KITTEN FROM FREEWAY

By KELLY NIX

THANKS TO a coordinated effort involving motorists, an SPCA worker and a California Highway Patrol officer, a wayward kitten that found itself precariously wandering alongside Highway 1 is safe.

On June 14 at about 9 a.m., a driver called authorities to report a cat on the freeway near the Highway 68 interchange heading toward Salinas. When California Highway Patrol officer Ryan Moore arrived, he spotted the distressed kitten on the side of the road and tried to catch it.

“I wondered if it was injured,” Moore, 39, told The

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PHOTO/SPCAMC

This young cat, which SPCA Monterey County has named Chippy, was rescued last week after being found on Highway 1.

It’s wildfire season, but early ones stopped in tracks

By CHRIS COUNTS

FOR THE second time in six weeks — reminding everybody how combustible the local vegetation is — a wildfire erupted near Bottchers Gap in Big Sur early Monday afternoon.

Despite its being one of more than a dozen wildfires crews are battling throughout the state, firefighters launched an aggressive attack and stopped it from spreading. In all, about 20 acres burned. The cause remains under investigation.

“They’re calling it 100 percent contained,” Andrew Madsen of the U.S. Forest Service told The Pine Cone Thursday.

Aggressive airshow

Madsen said help arrived not long after the blaze began. “We were able to get two hotshot crews released from the Post Fire in Los Angeles County,” he reported.

The fire started in Los Padres National Forest along the Skinners Ridge Trail near Bottchers Gap Campground, which is located at the end of Palo Colorado Road.

The Mid-Coast Fire Brigade received word of

Planning commission OKs rules to rein in short-term rentals

By CHRIS COUNTS

A DECADE after Monterey County officials took on the thorny task of regulating short-term rentals in unincorporated areas like Carmel Valley, Big Sur and outside the Carmel city limits, the county planning commission reached a milestone June 12 when it voted unanimously to send a set of ordinances to the board of supervisors, which will consider them Aug. 27.

Highlights include provisions that severely limit STRs in residential neighborhoods in Carmel Valley and everywhere in Big Sur.

The ordinances create rules for hosted — meaning the owner stays onsite — and unhosted rentals. Because unhosted STRs have been the source of most complaints about the industry, the ordinances heavily restrict them, while making it relatively easy to operate hosted rentals.

Planning commissioner Martha Diehl described the ordinances as “rational, understandable and a good beginning,” while commissioner Kate Daniels called them, “a huge deal.”

“This was 10 years in the making,” Daniels said. “The ordinances are finally ready to be moved to the supervisors — they are ready for adoption.”

Tough rules in C.V.

So what will be permitted in Carmel Valley, where the industry has notably clashed with residents over the proliferation of vacation rentals in single-family neighborhoods? The recommendations include permitting 201 unhosted short-term rentals in Carmel Valley, a big drop from the 300 an earlier draft. More significantly, the planning commission called for banning unhosted rentals from residential neighborhoods. Instead, they will be restricted to properties zoned for agriculture and commercial activities.

What will be allowed in Carmel Valley residential neighborhoods are “limited STRs” — which can be rented no more than three times a year without a host or rented out anytime as long as a host is onsite — and “home stays,” which are similar to limited STRs but must have an owner living onsite. Both categories will offer applicants an easier and less expensive permit process than commercial STRs.

More than 160 homes are being advertised as short-term rentals in Carmel Valley.

In Big Sur, commercial rentals won’t be allowed,

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the fire around 1:30 p.m. Monday. Its volunteers were quickly on scene, and soon the real firepower arrived.

“An aggressive airshow was established with five

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PHOTO/MICHAEL TROUTMAN, DMT IMAGING

A helicopter makes a drop on the Coast Fire, which started Monday near the end of Palo Colorado Road. The wildfire was stopped at 20 acres.