

# The Carmel Pine Cone

## After two-month wait, post office lobby reopens

By MARY SCHLEY

NINE WEEKS after an elderly Pebble Beach woman crashed her car into the front of the Fifth Avenue post office — causing so much damage that that part of the building was declared unsafe — it reopened with a temporary fix Wednesday morning.

Last Thursday afternoon, planning director Brandon Miller, building official Jermel Laurie and building inspector Duane Dauphinee met with the local postmaster, Jorge Gonzalez, and “came to an agreement on a temporary solution that would get the lobby back open on the Fifth Avenue side,” Swanson said, so residents could finally be able to buy stamps, mail packages and use the other services that have been unavailable since the building was damaged.

The plan they developed called for walling off the damaged section of the lobby on both sides, while letting the public use the undamaged doors from Fifth Avenue and access the customer service area from the post office box vestibule.

### Extraordinary measures

The building’s property management company, Manco Abbott, agreed to the construction, and Dauphinee and Laurie met with a representative from Cal Con Construction the next day. Work on

the temporary fix started Monday and wrapped up Tuesday afternoon, and the post office reopened for business at 10 a.m. Wednesday.

Swanson acknowledged the city’s involvement in what’s considered a private matter between the building

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PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Residents can once again buy stamps, mail packages and conduct other business at the post office, thanks to a temporary fix.

## Bridge railings loom as statewide issue

### ■ Historic posts and ‘flickering views’

By CHRIS COUNTS

TAKING ON a topic that has been debated for eight years and stirred up a hornets nest of opinions, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors Tuesday voted unanimously to again reject a request by Caltrans to replace the aging railings along Garrapata Bridge in Big Sur.

The state roads agency contends the old railings are falling apart, and new ones with beefier posts must be installed to keep the drivers of modern cars safe. But some locals, along with a handful of activists from elsewhere, said the railings should be replaced in kind to preserve the flickering views between the smaller posts they were originally built with — and they warned that approval of Caltrans’ plan would be precedent-setting for historic bridges throughout California.

### Compromise fails

The June 25 hearing came three months after the last public meeting on the subject in March, when supervisors OK’d the formation of a committee with three locals and three Caltrans representatives in an attempt to break the deadlock. Unfortunately, as several committee members reported at the hearing, a compromise wasn’t reached.

Caltrans official Peter Hendrix urged supervisors Tuesday to let Caltrans upgrade the historic Garrapata Bridge with new and safer ones.

“We have a responsibility to keep our bridges and highway in good condition and give motorists a safe driving experience,” Hendrix said. “If we believed we could replace the railings in kind and know that it would be a crash-safe barrier, we would be happy to do so. The existing railing has deteriorated and cannot be repaired — it must be replaced.”

Hendrix said that a critical window for doing the work is closing.

“The project is running a high risk of failure to deliver,” he warned. “If we delay this decision much further, we run into more peril. By December, the ability to fund the project is next to zero.”

### Legislative action?

A number of speakers pushed back against the necessity of changing the look of the railings, including county planning commissioner Martha Diehl, who spoke as a resident who lives near the bridge.

While Diehl said she has “great appreciation for the

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## Big response keeps Cachagua grass fire small

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER A person who claimed to be hiking at 11:45 p.m. Sunday reported seeing a grass fire deep in Carmel Valley, volunteer firefighters from Cachagua and crews from Cal Fire managed to find it and confine it to a 5-acre area in just a couple of hours, according to Cachagua Fire Asst. Chief Heather Curry.

“According to what we heard, someone was hiking and saw it from a distance,” she said. “We located the fire at the 31-mile marker of East Carmel Valley Road.”

### Nighttime temperatures

It was burning in the brush by the side of the road and spreading slowly, thanks to favorable weather conditions. Had it ignited earlier in the day, considering it was a particularly hot weekend, crews would have been battling a significantly different fire.

Because the fire broke out at night, the temperature was mild, and there was “little to no wind, so that was very helpful,” she said. “The fuels weren’t overly heated like they would have been during the day.”

Cachagua Fire, which is entirely staffed by volunteers, brought two engines, while Cal Fire scrambled five engines, a dozer and a water tender, according to Curry.

“Between Cachagua Fire Department and units from Cal Fire, we were able to contain it at 5 acres after approximately two hours,” she said. “It was a great team effort between the two agencies.”



PHOTO/CACHAGUA FIRE

A Cal Fire investigation concluded Sunday night’s fire in Upper Carmel Valley ignited after a car ran off the road into dry grass.

Cachagua Fire’s crews were sent home around 4:30 a.m. Monday, while Cal Fire units remained at the scene for several more hours to finish mopping up and to keep an eye out for any hotspots, according to Curry.

### Burned car

She didn’t know what started the blaze but suspects a damaged car firefighters discovered at the scene might have had something to do with it.

“It’s most likely under investigation through Cal Fire,

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## City studies crackdown on ‘ugly’ granny units

By MARY SCHLEY

THE RECENT construction of a large granny unit on a corner lot at Monte Verde and 13th has evoked enough outcry that it’s now publicly known, at least in some circles, as “the worst ADU in the city.” That title formerly belonged to the accessory dwelling unit built at Guadalupe and Fourth across from the Carl Cherry Center, and both have generated a lot of conversation, especially among Carmel planning commissioners and others fuming at their loss of control over such development.

An ordinance being drafted by the planning department might prevent similar units, which are basically mandated by state laws that wrested away most local oversight in the name of encouraging the construction of more housing. But two powerful state agencies will have to sign off on the ordinance first, according to assistant city administrator Brandon Swanson, and they might not see things the same way.

The California Coastal Commission advocates for coastal access, but also has a history of vigorously protecting natural resources, while the California Department of Housing and Community Development is intent on

### Coastal commission says Carmel is a ‘special community’

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## RuffRaff gets to work



PHOTO/CARMEL P.D.

After RuffRaff the dog got lost in Devendorf Park during a game of hide and seek and was later found by police, he was immediately hired to work the night shift. See page 23A.