

Woman, pets escape fast-burning valley fire

Family loses everything

By MARY SCHLEY

SMOKE ALARMS probably saved Heather Howe’s life early July 4, when the Carmel Valley Village home she occupies with her son, cat and dog caught fire and quickly burned to the ground, according to Monterey County Regional Deputy Fire Chief Eric Ulwelling.

“The presence of working smoked detectors I’m confident saved her life,” he said. “She’d been at a fire safety



An early-morning fire quickly destroyed this Carmel Valley Village home on July 4. The resident and her pets made it out safely, and a fundraising effort to help her is underway. Smoke alarms saved her life.

class a few weeks earlier and had recently changed the batteries.”

The alarms’ screeching woke Howe shortly after 4 a.m., and she rushed to discover a fire had started in her kitchen. “She attempted to extinguish it with a blanket and unfortunately got a pretty significant flash burn,” he said, so she grabbed her dog and fled, leaving her cell phone, car keys and everything else behind.

Her young son, Eli, was out of the house at an overnight

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PHOTOS/ERIC ULWELLING

Council narrowly decides in favor of house numbers

Impassioned voices on both sides of 100-year-old controversy

By MARY SCHLEY

IN THE name of public safety — and remedying the city’s longstanding violation of the California Fire Code — the Carmel City Council voted 3-2 Tuesday night to pursue implementation of a conventional street-address system.

As it has every time the subject has come up during the past two-plus years, and all the many years before that, the discussion evoked deeply held feelings on each side.

Many of the 30 speakers and others who sent emails complained of lost deliveries of critical medications, difficulties establishing utilities and getting loans, emergency service workers going to the wrong houses, and mislaid packages, among other concerns.

Those defending the city’s age-old tradition of using cute names and directional code, such as “Junipero 3 SW of Third,” to identify their homes said giving that up would reduce the town’s charm and character, lead to the demise of the local post office, and turn Carmel into just another coastal town.

Councilwoman Karen Ferlito has long supported the idea and became the sole member of an ad hoc committee assigned last November to study the issue after councilwoman Alissandra Dramov dropped out.

Would ‘248 Torres St.’ spell an end to quaintness?

USPS in charge

Ferlito worked with administrative analyst Emily Garay, who told the council at the marathon July 9 meeting that the U.S. Postal Service said assigning house numbers would not result in any changes in mail delivery — all residents will still need to go to the Fifth Avenue post office to pick up their mail and packages — nor would it lead to the closure of the post office, which some hold dear as a sort of community meeting place.

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Dems say paying teens for sex shouldn’t be felony

By KELLY NIX

A BILL aimed at making it a felony to pay minors, including children, for sex passed a State Assembly committee last week, but only after Democrats modified the legislation to weaken protections for 16- and 17-year-old victims.

A proposed law written by Bakersfield Republican Sen. Shannon Grove and co-authored by Democrat senators Anna Caballero from the Central Valley and Susan Rubio from Baldwin Park seeks to make the act of soliciting or engaging in any act of commercial sex with a minor a felony. Existing state law treats crimes involving buying sex from children as misdemeanors, except for those 14 and under and where use of force is used.

Weakened protections

The new bill sought to increase penalties for sex crimes involving minors, but Democrats on the Senate Public Safety Committee weakened protections in the legislation, SB 1414 before sending it to the Senate floor, including making buying sex with 16- and 17-year-old children a misdemeanor and purchasing sex from a 15-year-old a “wobbler,” meaning prosecutors could charge buyers with

either misdemeanors or felonies in such cases.

Last week, Grove’s bill passed out of the Assembly Public Safety Committee, but only after Democrats made further modifications, including requiring that 16- and 17-year-olds be proven victims of human trafficking, not just victims of sex solicitation, in order for the buyer to be subject to a stricter penalty. Grove argued that doing that would make it harder for district attorneys to prosecute offenders.

‘Sit there and think’

“Individuals who try to buy sex from kids deserve to go to prison,” Grove told the Assembly committee during the July 2 hearing. “They deserve to sit there and think about what they’ve done and hopefully, at minimum, keep them away from the children whose lives they seek to destroy.”

After the vote, a disappointed Grove said, “it should not be so complicated to protect all children from being purchased for sex, yet some Democrat legislators think 16- and 17-year-olds should not have the same protections given to 15-year-

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COCKFIGHTING CONCERNS BLOCK ROOSTER PERMIT

By CHRIS COUNTS

COCKFIGHTING WASN’T on the agenda, but the unanimous denial by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors Tuesday of an application to raise roosters and chickens in Aromas highlighted the supervisors’ concerns about proliferation of the illegal blood sport.

The topic came up in May after the Monterey County agricultural commissioner denied an application by Gonzalo Narez to raise roosters and chickens at 19205 El Cerrito Way in Aromas.

Narez had applied for a poultry hobbyist exemption, which would have allowed him to keep five or more roosters without needing a permit.

But the request was denied, so he appealed that decision to the supervisors.

A county report indicated that an inspection of Narez’s property found roosters of the same variety that are favored for cockfighting

— and some were groomed like those used in the fights. Also found were restraints and boxes for roosters that are associated with the practice.

There were very few hens on site, leading to speculation that breeding farm animals was not the objective of the operation.

Right not recognized

Assistant agricultural commissioner Rich Ordonez noted that Narez is a member of the United Gamefowl Breeders Association, which Ordonez said the California Department of Food and Agriculture doesn’t recognize due to “their promotion of preserving the rights of keeping cockfighting birds, and their connection to the cockfighting realm.”

A woman who spoke for Narez at the hearing pushed back against claims he’s raising roosters for cockfighting. Instead, she said he’s

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Freeway kitty adopted by rescuer

THE CHP officer who helped rescue a lost and frightened kitten on a busy highway last month has given the animal a home, SPCA Monterey County said.

On the morning of June 14, California Highway Patrol Officer Ryan Moore was called to a report of a wayward cat on Highway 1 near Highway 68.

Worried that the cat would get hit, Moore stopped traffic and the small feline eventually jumped into a wheel well of a motorist’s Prius. After removing a few of the engine compartment’s parts, an SPCA worker was able to reach the cat.

While the SPCA had put the kitten up for adoption, Moore, who helped save the animal, decided to keep it.

“Chippy was adopted by the CHP of-



PHOTO/SPCA MONTEREY COUNTY

ficer who saved her,” SPCA spokeswoman Beth Brookhouser told The Pine Cone, using the name the SPCA gave the kitten.