

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Election will be the most contested in years

### ■ Three more qualify for council ballot

By MARY SCHLEY

LESS THAN two weeks into the filing period, five candidates have obtained enough signatures to qualify in the city's Nov. 5 election for mayor and city council — none of them incumbents.

The most recent is Hans Buder, spokesman for the group that's searching for new sites to accommodate low-cost housing so it won't have to be built on city property. The Monterey County Elections department verified Tuesday that he'd gotten enough voters to sign his nomination papers and will be among the candidates vying for two city council seats.

"Having grown up on Martha's Vineyard, I have a deep appreciation for the issues impacting small coastal communities, and I'm passionate about protecting the charm and natural beauty of Carmel," he said in an email to The Pine Cone.

#### Top of class

Buder's wife, Meghan, graduated from Carmel High School, where her mother was a teacher for nearly 20 years. "We've lived in Carmel-by-the-Sea for the past eight years and are raising our three young kids here," he said.

Buder, 38, founded and is executive director of the Moving to Opportunity Fund, "a social-impact-focused real estate investment firm with a double bottom line mission: to put low-income kids born into concentrated poverty on the path to college by providing their families with access to affordable housing in communities with high-performing public schools, while delivering market-rate returns for investors."

He was formerly a project manager in the San Francisco branch of a real estate developer specializing in mixed-income housing and the revitalization of distressed urban neighborhoods, and before that worked for a Boston-based real estate private equity firm. He also taught science at an inner-city middle school in New Orleans as

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### Mayor, two council openings attract eight candidates so far

## Did you hear a tuba? I swear I heard a tuba.

By CHRIS COUNTS

A COUPLE was married Saturday at Carmel Mission, and the University of California Marching Band was there to let everyone within earshot know about it. The spectacle kicked off around 4:30 p.m.

"A wedding party left the rear parking lot at the Carmel Mission with the Cal marching band leading the way," reported Peter Krause, who lives with his wife across the street from the Mission.



## City finds plenty not to like in latest Pastor plan

By MARY SCHLEY

THE FIVE-YEAR saga of Patrice Pastor's efforts to build a mixed-use complex on Dolores south of Seventh continued apace earlier this month, when the Carmel Planning Commission generally panned the proposed design and asked for a significant redo.

After purchasing a single lot several years ago and submitting plans for redeveloping it in 2019, Pastor bought



RENDERING/JUN A. SILLANO, AIA

An architect's rendering shows the proposed JB Pastor building fronting on Dolores Street south of the 7D Steakhouse.

two lots to the north — one of which contains the community room built behind the former bank that had been declared historic — and presented revised plans for a 16,898-square-foot complex with apartments, retail space and underground parking.

That application called for demolition of the community room, which wasn't considered historic at the time, but the historic resources board in May 2021 denied the project. Pastor in August of that year asked the city council to overturn that vote, but it didn't.

#### Slightly smaller

A revision considered by the HRB in January 2023 would have relocated the community room, but the HRB listed the entire Seventh & Dolores complex on the local historic inventory and register and again concluded the plans would violate federal rules for the treatment of historic properties.

Pastor appealed once more, and the city council in May 2023 again upheld the board's decision.

The news finally improved for Pastor when, in July 2023, the HRB voted in favor of yet another revised plan, slightly smaller in scale at 15,351 square feet, which would retain the community room but relocate a section of a decorated concrete wall that borders it.

But city council members Karen Ferlito and Alissandra Dramov used their privilege as elected officials to call up that decision for a ruling by the

*See PASTOR page 16A*

## RESTAURANT OWNER ADMITS CREDIT CARD FRAUD

### ■ Accomplice may have fled country

By MARY SCHLEY

DIA KHEIR, who owns two restaurants in downtown Carmel, pleaded guilty July 18 to grand theft and credit card fraud amounting to more than \$100,000 according to Monterey County Chief Deputy District Attorney Emily Hickok, and is set to be sentenced in October.

Kheir, 52, bought Yafa restaurant at Junipero and Fifth in 2019 and then opened Carmel's Hidden Gem a few blocks away in 2022.

According to prosecutors, Kheir and a co-conspirator, Tarek Hamade, used a complex scheme of maxing out

multiple credit cards and never paying them off, running fake charges through Yafa's cash register system, and engaging in other schemes to bilk five financial institutions out of nearly \$214,000 in 2021.

Kheir, who was living in a Carmel Meadow apartment with wife Rita, was arrested in fall 2022 after an extensive investigation, while Hamade is thought to be out of the country and remains on the lam.

#### Lots of evidence

According to Monterey County Superior Court records, Kheir was charged with 13 felonies for grand theft, credit card fraud and money laundering, with numerous enhancements because the losses totaled more than \$100,000, and after he was arrested he was released on \$100,000 bail.

At a preliminary hearing in January in which Hickok and two investigators presented evidence to Superior Court Judge Pam Butler, Hickok explained that Kheir "conspired to make charges on Hamade's credit cards, and then they were never paid." In interviews with

*See FRAUD page 21A*

## MPWMD to roll out new job title to ease burden on GM

By KELLY NIX

THE MONTEREY Peninsula Water Management District board of directors — apparently believing general manager Dave Stoldt is working too much — will consider hiring an assistant GM next month to help him. The job description, if directors OK it, will be a first for the 46-year-old public agency.

At the July 15 MPWMD meeting during a discussion about giving water district employees and Stoldt raises, he told the seven-member board that he would agendize an item to hire someone to help him do his job.

"Next month, I'll be bringing you a job description for an assistant general manager," he said.

This week, The Pine Cone asked Stoldt, among other things, why the new position is necessary.

*See JOB page 23A*

PHOTOS/PETER KRAUSE

Founded in 1891 and known today as one of the top marching bands in the country, the University of California Marching Band created quite a spectacle Saturday afternoon when it showed up at Carmel Mission for a wedding and led a procession to Mission Ranch.