

Following record turnout, new mayor, councilmembers sworn in

By MARY SCHLEY

PARTICIPATION BY Carmel voters in the Nov. 5 election was 20 percent higher than in Monterey County as a whole, according to results confirmed by the elections department last week and officially accepted by the outgoing city

council at a special meeting Monday, with nearly 90 percent of the city’s 2,561 registered voters casting ballots.

By comparison, in the 2022 election which saw Mayor Dave Potter elected to his third term, councilman Jeff Baron elected to his second and Alissandra Dramov join the council, just under 77 percent of the

city’s 2,548 voters participated.

The Dec. 9 meeting, which packed city hall, marked the transition of power from outgoing council members Bobby Richards and Karen Ferlito, both of whom decided not to seek reelection, and Potter, who came in third behind Baron and winner Dale Byrne.

After joining her cohorts in unanimously voting to approve a resolution declaring the election results, Ferlito offered some parting comments.

“The four years that I have served have been exciting, interesting, challenging, and most of all, rewarding, because I do love Carmel-by-the-Sea,” she said.

Ferlito also offered some advice to the newcomers. “I want to remind the new council that you serve the entire community,” she said. “Don’t make decisions based just on the people who show up that night.”

Every email

She urged them to read every email and text they receive, and she praised the city’s staff for their talent, dedication and hard work.

“They deserve to be noticed and thanked,” she said.

Richards, who served two four-year terms but decided not to run for a third after he was diagnosed with cancer — which has since been



PHOTOS/KERRY BELSER

Promising to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California against all enemies, foreign and domestic,” Bob Delves (left) and Hans Buder (center) were sworn in as councilmembers and seated alongside new Mayor Dale Byrne (right) Monday.

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P.G. seeking volunteers for council vacancy

■ ‘Land acknowledgment’ pitched

By KELLY NIX

ONE OF two newly elected Pacific Grove City Council members sworn in last week proposed that the panel start reading aloud a “land acknowledgment” at every meeting to recognize an indigenous American Indian tribe whose people have lived on the Monterey Peninsula for thousands of years.

At the Dec. 4 council meeting, new members Tina Rau, who served on the city’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force, and Paul Walkingstick were sworn in, along with councilman Chaps Poduri, who was reelected, and Nick Smith, a former councilman who was elected mayor Nov. 5.

Rau wasted no time in advancing her DEI agenda by proposing that the city adopt a feel-good acknowledgment to recognize the Rumsen Ohlone indigenous tribal community, and that such a statement be read aloud by a different council member at each meeting following the Pledge

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Feds plan to list monarchs as threatened species

By CHRIS COUNTS

AN ICONIC insect that is one of Pacific Grove’s biggest attractions, the monarch butterfly could soon receive federal protection as a threatened species, according to a proposal by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The distinctive black and orange butterfly famously overwinters in Pacific Grove’s Monarch Grove Sanctuary, along with numerous other sites in California and Mexico. P.G.’s sanctuary receives a steady flow of visitors during the winter months as people from near and far come to see the butterflies cluster among the pines, cypress and eucalyptus.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director Martha Williams noted that while the colorful butterfly is “fragile,” it’s also “remarkably resilient — like many things in nature when we just give them a chance.”

“The iconic monarch butterfly is cherished across North America, captivating children and adults throughout its fascinating lifecycle,” Williams said. “Working together, we can help make this extraordinary species a legacy for our children and generations to come.”

According to the federal wildlife agency, more than 4.5 million

monarchs overwintered along the coast of California annually during the 1980s, but the population has crashed since. The causes include “loss and degradation of breeding, migratory and overwintering habitat, exposure to insecticides, and the effects of climate change.”

Steep decline

“The population has declined by more than 95 percent since the 1980s, putting the western populations at greater than 99 percent chance of extinction by 2080,” the agency said.

Besides declaring monarchs threatened on a federal level, the agency wants to designate “critical habitat” for the butterflies, including land in Alameda, Marin, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz and Ventura counties.

The agency noted that overwintering habitats like the one in Pacific Grove “provide an essential resting place for monarchs during the cold winter months and help them

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CHS night games not a reality — yet

By MARY SCHLEY

MORE THAN a year ago, the four new light poles at the Carmel High School athletic stadium that were the focal point of a lawsuit filed by a neighbor group passed a critical environmental test — but the school’s football team still hasn’t been allowed to host games there at night. Instead, the team’s evening contests, including the recent CCS and NorCal playoffs, have been held at Monterey Peninsula College, which has a much larger capacity and ample parking.

“For the fall 2024 football season, CUSD partnered with Monterey Peninsula College to host Friday evening home games, in addition to Saturday games held at the CHS stadium during the day,” confirmed Carmel Unified School District’s chief operations officer, Dan Paul.

Late last year, the lights, along with new

ones at the pool, were tested by the International DarkSky Association — “a recognized worldwide authority combating light pollution” — with the organization sending a letter to the district a few weeks later stating that the stadium lights weren’t ruining the night sky.

Requirements to meet

However, while that certification was imperative, the facility still hasn’t met all of the requirements outlined in the lighting project’s expansive environmental impact report, according to Paul.

“These efforts focus on implementing the measures outlined in the EIR’s mitigation and monitoring reporting program to ensure safety, accessibility, and compliance with environmental and logistical standards,” he said

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Trout delivery by the gallon



PHOTO/MONTEREY COUNTY

A hose was used by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife this week to stock Lake San Antonio with 4,000 pounds of rainbow trout. See page 19A.