



The Carmel Pine Cone

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Town celebrates 48-7 stomping in state championship



With the help of his fearsome front line, CHS tailback Ashton Rees (above left) scampered for 209 yards during Carmel's 48-7 rout of El Capitan in California's 5AA state championship football game Friday. After the game, the Padres celebrated the title and their 15-0 season en masse (left), and on Thursday they lined up for a parade down Ocean Avenue (above), so the whole town could do the same thing. See Dennis Taylor's story, page 33A.

PHOTOS/ANDREW TRONICK, KERRY BELSER

2025 to feature public drinking and cannabis cafes

By CAITLIN CONRAD

CALIFORNIA MAY be plagued with budget deficits, underperforming schools, a housing shortage and rising crime and homelessness, but in the New Year, at least, it's going to be easier to have a good time. The state is set to open the doors to Amsterdam-style cannabis cafes and drinking in public in newly legal entertainment zones. State Sen. Scott Wiener, a San Francisco Democrat, authored Senate Bill 969 this year allowing local governments to designate entertainment zones. Bars and restaurants in those areas can sell alcoholic beverages to patrons who will be allowed to drink them on public streets and sidewalks.

Bouncing back?

The zones are designed to bring more foot traffic to downtowns which, in some cities, like Wiener's, have yet to recover from the Covid pandemic and have suffered from waves of civic disorder. Cities wishing to embrace entertainment zones will have to establish the districts, as well as procedures for guaranteeing that people drinking alcohol within them are 21 or older.

San Francisco was a test case for the law during the last year when, thanks to a previous piece of Wiener's legislation, entertainment zones became legal at the start of 2024. In September, the city designated a zone for public drinking at its Oktoberfest and reported 20 times the patrons it recorded at the same event in 2023.

"Getting people out in the streets to enjoy themselves is critical for communities across our state to bounce back from the pandemic," said Wiener, "I'm thrilled to see the program's massive success in San Francisco expand across the state."

'Party zone' opposition

Not everyone is thrilled with the easing of public drinking laws. The California Alcohol Policy Alliance opposed SB 969, arguing the suspension of open container rules would lead to "party zones." "To put it more simply, it allows Bourbon Street to open in any and every California town," wrote the alliance

\$62,000 check stolen from mail, cashed

■ 'Bleached' and rewritten

By CHRIS COUNTS

A COUPLE from Carmel Highlands was shocked to discover that a check for \$62,000 they mailed to a contractor was cashed by someone else.

The residents, who told The Pine Cone they wish to remain anonymous, were understandably dismayed by the theft — and for weeks, they were uncertain if they would get their money back. The wait was made even more stressful by what they said was a lack of response from local law enforcement. But this week, they received a message from their bank that their account was credited for the full amount.

The hefty check was mailed in November, along with

four other envelopes containing checks, at the post office on Via Nona Marie. On Dec. 2, the couple was notified by Bank of America that one of their checks had been cashed by someone other than the intended recipient.

"We found out that a check for \$62,000 intended for our contractor was 'washed' and an individual's name was inserted," they reported.

Other checks missing, too

The couple said that none of the other checks, which were for much smaller amounts, have been cashed yet, leading to speculation they also didn't reach their intended destinations. The couple reported two other checks sent a month earlier never arrived, either.

"We don't think it's a coincidence," they said.

The couple credited the U.S. Postmaster General's office with helping them get their money back.

See CASHED page 13A

See DRINKING page 19A

Sheriff's office can't substantiate woman's bizarre P.B. tree story

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER LOCATING a witness they thought might shed some light on a woman's claims that a gunman tied her to a tree in Pebble Beach Dec. 4, Monterey County Sheriff's deputies said they have been unable to validate her story. But that doesn't mean the investigation is over. The unnamed victim, who is said to be in her 40s, told authorities she was on a walk in the quarry area off Haul Road near Highway 68 around 7:30 a.m. when "she noticed a suspicious male was following her," Cmdr. Andy Rosas said.

"As the male got close to her, he pulled out a gun and walked her to a nearby tree where he proceeded to tie her up," he said she told investigators. "The male then left on foot," without injuring, robbing or further assaulting her."

See TREE page 23A



Less than a week after storms felled trees, seriously damaging a home on Sloat Road in Pebble Beach (right) and causing widespread power outages that put many Monterey Peninsula retailers out of commission during a busy holiday shopping weekend, a semi-trailer truck overturned while turning left onto Carmel Valley Road from Highway 1 Thursday morning (left), snarling traffic in all directions and curtailing access to several shopping centers.



PHOTO/(LEFT) DAVID MULLALLY, (RIGHT) GREG LEE