

Pickleball guidelines may be turned into law

By MARY SCHLEY

AMID THE many weighty issues Carmel city officials must deal with — unfunded pension liabilities in the tens of millions of dollars, a badly deteriorating police station that no one seems to know how to remedy, a large backlog of deferred maintenance on public facilities, and even the contentious issue of house numbers — one that can always be relied upon to generate hours of debate is



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

The Forest Hill Park courts were popular with pickleballers Thursday morning — likely to the irritation of some nearby residents. They set up portable nets to play there three days a week.

the game of pickleball.

Residents who live near the Forest Hill Park tennis courts where the game is played complain that the constant pop-pop-pop noise and accompanying raised voices are nails-on-chalkboard-level irritating. Fans of the game insist it's critical to their health, happiness and well-being. Opponents suggest they should find somewhere else to play it, then. And devotees tell them they shouldn't live next to a park if they don't like the sounds of recreation.

At the end of a three-plus-hour discussion last Thursday, the Carmel Forest and Beach Commission decided to ask the city council to impose new restrictions on pickleball play at the park — and to adopt an ordinance that would make violating those rules punishable by fines and penalties.

14-year debate

Pickleball players started using the Forest Hill tennis courts in 2011, when the forest and beach commission approved striping two courts for their use, but the grievances didn't start ramping up until a decade later, when the commission OK'd the striping of two more courts as the game continued to gain popularity.

Numerous neighbor complaints regarding noise and parking, countered by those defending the activity, have been fielded at various public meetings, and last year, the city council asked the commission to "find a balance" between the two factions.

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TRUMP HURTING TRAVEL BOOKINGS, HOTELIER SAYS

By MARY SCHLEY

REACTING TO President Donald Trump's trade policies and his talk of making their country the 51st state, Canadian travelers are canceling plans to visit the United States, including Carmel and the rest of Monterey County, some hoteliers are reporting. Others, however, say they have seen no impacts on occupancy since Trump imposed 25 percent tariffs on many imported items earlier this year.

Mark Watson, general manager of Inns-by-the-Sea, which has three properties in Carmel, said he has seen a huge shift.

Since Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, through March 19, "with respect to Canadian bookings compared to averages in 2023 and 2024," Watson said, new bookings from

Canadian visitors are down 76 percent. As a result, lost revenue is estimated at \$11,411, and money lost from cancellations has totaled \$6,781 more than the same time-frame in previous years.

"In less than one month, we've seen a potential loss of \$18,304," he said.

'Unwarranted and demeaning'

The Inns-by-the-Sea GM also provided a comment from a Canadian would-have-been customer who had booked a four-night stay in April but decided to cancel.

"My wife and I were quite excited to be coming back to visit Carmel, as it has been quite a few years since we were last there," the client, whose name Watson withheld, wrote in the note requesting cancellation and the refund of a roughly \$650 deposit. "However, the aggressive, punitive, unwarranted and demeaning actions of your federal government against Canada make a visit at this time unacceptable to us and many other Canadians. Your inn looked wonderful, and we know you would have treated us well. Our complaint is only with your government."

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Legislature attempts to override local zoning around transit hubs

By CAITLIN CONRAD

STATE SEN. Scott Wiener is hoping the third time will be the charm as he introduces yet another bill in Sacramento to increase housing density near transit sites across California.

SB 79 would allow more homes to be built near major public transportation stops and on land transit agencies own, including apartment buildings up to seven stories tall, essentially eliminating local zoning restrictions in those areas.

"Decades of overly restrictive policies have driven housing costs to astronomical levels, forcing millions of people away from jobs and transit and into long commutes from the suburbs," said Wiener, a San Francisco Democrat.

Height limits

Unlike his past three attempts to loosen the reins on affordable housing near transit, this bill is more focused. It applies only to neighborhoods around train, ferry and rapid bus transit stations and on land owned by transit agencies. Height limits on potential buildings also scale down as they move away from transit stops.

Developers looking to build up to seven stories would only have the option to do so around train stations in the

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Revised Pastor project headed for new hearings

■ Retail and eight apartments

By MARY SCHLEY

A SCALED-DOWN version of Patrice Pastor's plans to build apartments and shops on three lots next to the Seventh & Dolores Steakhouse is set to be presented to the Carmel Planning Commission for review next month. In advance of that, his design team has produced a 3D fly-through video to show how various aspects of the project might look and feel.

"We are pleased to be back before the planning commission to present this important project for both our company and the town," Pastor told The Pine Cone this week. "In response to feedback from the city, neighbors and the wider community, we have thoughtfully adapted our plans. We are confident this design will complement Carmel seamlessly, blending in as if it has always been part of the town."

Rooftop garden

Named the JB Pastor Building in honor of Pastor's father, the 13,592-square-foot mixed-use development calls for 6,046 square feet spread out among a half-dozen commercial spaces on the ground floor, and eight second-floor apartments ranging from 477 square feet to 1,544 square feet. The rooftop will include solar panels, terraces, trees and plants.

The plans provide for a dozen parking spaces — fewer than what the code requires — while an 852-square-foot

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RENDERING/JUN SILLANO, IDG ARCHITECTS

A still from a fly-through video provides a better look at Patrice Pastor's proposed project for Dolores and Seventh. The planning commission is set to discuss it next month.

Coastal commission logic: Picnic area needed for road fix

■ 'Mitigation' for repairing rockslide

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE CONCEPT might make your head spin, but to compensate for the loss of "coastal resources" to the public when Caltrans cleared the largest rockslide in California's recorded history, the road agency — which is to say, the taxpayers — will have to pay for the development of a recreation site nearby.

One state agency requires another to pay for it — with your money

Never mind that tons of rocks and mud have been tumbling down Big Sur hill-sides for eons. The California Coastal Commission has determined that Caltrans' efforts to reestablish Highway 1 along a stretch of the pavement that was inundated by six million cubic yards of material in 2017 caused such an impact to "public access and visual resources" that the work needs to be offset with a project that gives people more access to the coast.

While it's unclear what degree of public access previously existed at the location of the slide, known as Mud

Creek, it can be argued that the work by Caltrans has impacted the look of the site. But without their efforts, the slide would still be there. So what options did Caltrans and its contractors have? And why is the public funding what looks like a penalty imposed by one state agency on another?

Unanimous vote

The California Coastal Commission voted unanimously March 12 in Santa Cruz to require that Caltrans establish a publicly accessible recreational site as a condition for making safety improvements to the section of Highway 1 buried by the Mud Creek Slide. According to Caltrans project manager Ryan Caldera, the slide dumped "enough material on the road to fill the Monterey Airport runway 100 feet high."

In an effort to reopen the highway, Caltrans received five emergency permits to clear the slide. The work included a "massive engineered embankment," along with large catchment basins, rock fall wire mesh, extensive grading and 11 acres of armoring at the bottom of the slide. More work still needs to be done, including realigning the road, making drainage improvements, revegetating slopes and replacing K-rail with guard rails. The highway

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