

Fire destroys burger place near aquarium

By KELLY NIX

A FIRE at a Carl’s Jr. restaurant on the border of Monterey and Pacific Grove Thursday morning drew a large response from firefighters who battled the pesky blaze, which led to a partial collapse of the fast-food eatery.



PHOTO/KELLY NIX

Flames erupt from the roof of Carl’s Jr. on Lighthouse Avenue in Monterey Thursday. The fire, which broke out shortly after it opened, destroyed the restaurant.

The fire started before 7 a.m. at the burger place on Central Avenue near the Monterey Bay Aquarium. When Pine Cone reporters got there, white and gray smoke was billowing from the rooftop and blowing north toward Andronico’s market, but there were no visible flames.

At about 7:15 a.m., as firefighters with Monterey, Pebble Beach, Carmel and Seaside were preparing to lay hose and attack the fire, the first flames could be seen from the street.

“It’s like a giant barbecue,” an onlooker said to another man watching the fire.

Pouring water

About five minutes later, a firefighter started shooting water remotely from a hose hanging from the top of a ladder, with another ladder truck and ground crews joining in shortly thereafter to attack the flames pouring out of the roof, which was recently replaced.

“I guess they keep hammering it until they don’t see any more flames,” another onlooker said.

Even as firefighters used four hoses and thousands of gallons of water to douse the blaze, flames continued to pop up until almost

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Judge upholds permits for Cal Am’s desal

■ Big setback for Marina, water district

By KELLY NIX

A MONTEREY judge has handed a huge legal victory to California American Water and its proposed desalination plant by rejecting a lawsuit filed by several agencies that challenged the California Coastal Commission’s decision to approve the water project.

In a 118-page decision March 28, Monterey County Superior Court Judge Thomas Wills rejected a lawsuit filed in January 2023 by the City of Marina, Marina Coast Water District and the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District against the coastal panel for its November 2022 approval of Cal Am’s 4.8-million-gallon-per-day desal plant.

A spokesman for Cal Am called the decision, “another step that reaffirms the reasonableness of the water supply project and moves the project forward to help provide a sustainable, drought-proof water supply for the Monterey Peninsula while protecting the Carmel River.”

The water districts and Marina claimed that the state agency violated state regulations in November 2022 when, after a 13-hour public hearing in Salinas, it voted 8-2 to OK the Cal Am project and grant the company a permit to build it. The plaintiffs had asked the court to put the permit on hold until the desal proposal was “in compliance” with state laws.

No ‘abuse of discretion’

But Wills said that the plaintiffs — which had contested the project’s environmental impact report — had not shown that the coastal commission exceeded its jurisdiction or abused its discretion in its approval of the plant, and that it did so “while following the law and based on substantial evidence.”

“Feelings run high on both sides of the issues surrounding this desalination plant, and there was evidence submitted both for and against the project,” Wills wrote. “Disagreement among experts does not make an environmental

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New committee will study house numbers

■ No ballot measure likely

By MARY SCHLEY

IT APPEARS a previous Carmel City Council decision to hold an advisory vote on house numbers in November is headed for the dustbin, and a group of city officials and citizens will try to come up with a scheme for officially recognized street addresses that somehow retain Carmel’s signature quirkiness.

Those moves came at the end of another lengthy council discussion Tuesday night regarding whether the tradition of not having house numbers in most of the city should be done away with in favor of safety, convenience, adherence to state laws and other factors.

The council, with three recently elected members — Mayor Dale Byrne and members Bob Delves and Hans Buder — had asked for a comprehensive report on the history of the debate over house numbers since its most recent genesis in 2022, information on how a system might

be implemented and potential impacts on mail service and the downtown post office, and legal requirements for having addresses recognized by the federal agency’s address management system and GPS-based navigation systems in smartphones and automobiles.

“We’re a new city council. Dale and Hans and I are all new and were not part of the city council in September 2024 when this was last discussed,” Delves said before

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Should Carmel have a police department?

■ Consolidation with other cities raised

By MARY SCHLEY

DURING ANOTHER discussion about what to do with the aging police station — an issue that’s been debated since 2017 — some Carmel City Council members suggested making only minor improvements until they decide whether law enforcement should be contracted out to another agency, the way fire services are.

“The trend seems to be consolidation, not growth,” councilwoman Alissandra Dramov said at the March 27 meeting, raising the possibility the city could combine forces with other local cities and end up with a smaller facility in town instead of a new station expanded to meet the needs of a full-service, stand-alone department.

‘A mess’

“We have to look at the future of policing as potentially a shared service,” councilman Bob Delves agreed. “It has worked with the fire department, and most people said it wouldn’t. I think the reality is that it’s better.”

The council’s two-hour discussion began with architect John Hammond of the firm Indigo, which specializes in designing police facilities, presenting plans for a reconfigured police/public works building and then showing rough drawings of a smaller complex, as the council requested during a similar meeting in February.

“Hopefully you’ve all seen the existing police station and what a mess it is,” Hammond told the council, adding that it is more than 60 years old and has never been remodeled.

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Panetta coauthors bill to curtail tariff powers

By KELLY NIX

REP. JIMMY Panetta introduced a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives this week aimed at giving Congress, instead of the executive branch, the power to impose broad trade tariffs. The lawmaker announced the bill a day before President Donald Trump unveiled a new round of tariffs on dozens of countries, saying the U.S. has been harmed by grossly unequal tariff arrangements with many nations.

Trade imbalances

The Reclaim Trade Powers Act seeks to strike a section of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows a president to impose sweeping 15 percent tariffs on all imports in the event of a “balance of payments crisis.” While the U.S. has a huge trade deficit — importing \$1.2 trillion more in goods and services than it exported in 2024 — Panetta said the Trump Administration has misused the term to justify tariffs based on trade imbalances rather than genuine

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BETTY WHITE HONORED WITH ‘FOREVER’ STAMP

By CHRIS COUNTS

A LONGTIME local with a legendary sense of humor and a passion for helping animals, the late Betty White, who passed away four years ago at 99, is being honored by the United States Postal Service with a commemorative stamp. The 73-cent “Forever” stamp features White’s portrait with an impish smile on her face.

“The U.S. Postal Service today celebrated beloved entertainer Betty White’s mischievous wit, saucy persona and tireless advocacy for animals with a new stamp at a first-day-of-issue ceremony at the Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens,” the federal agency announced March 27.

Postal service official Amber McReynolds called White “an



A new postage stamp pays tribute to actress and longtime Carmel resident Betty White.

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