

‘Open permit’ warning comes 30 years late

By KELLY NIX

WITH NEW water on the way for the Monterey Peninsula — which means a host of permits will soon be issued — a Monterey man was surprised recently to receive a notice claiming he hadn’t fulfilled the conditions of a water permit issued to him nearly three decades after he received one.

David Fockler in late March received a note from a Monterey Peninsula Water Management District “conservation technician” informing him that the district issued a water permit for his property on Jan. 17, 1997, but that a final inspection had not been done and was necessary to “confirm compliance with the permit’s requirements.”

“Included in the water district’s letter was a wrinkled, yellow copy of the 1997 permit — 28 years later,” Fockler told The Pine Cone.

‘We apologize’

The notice from the government agency said, “We understand that some property owners may have forgotten about the permit or might not even be aware that a remodel requiring a water permit took place on their property. If this applies to you, we apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.”

However, the district’s note to Fockler went from forbearing to threatening a few lines later, and it warned of consequences if he didn’t comply with its order.

A ‘notice of completion’ from the county, but not from the water district

“Please be advised that properties not in compliance with district water permit requirements may be subject to the recording of a notice of non-compliance on the property title, along with other potential actions,” the agency said.

The district went on to say that if it is required to record such a notice, “additional fees will apply.”

Fockler, though, contends that a final inspection was performed.

“I spoke with a person at the county inspection office, and was told that the recorded notice of completion,

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BEEFIER BOXES MAKE IT HARDER TO STEAL MAIL

By CHRIS COUNTS

RESPONDING TO complaints about stolen mail — including local incidents of checks being “bleached” and cashed — the United States Postal Service recently



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

A woman struggles to get her letters into a new theft-deterrent mailbox at the mouth-of-the-valley post office Thursday.

City OKs fire map but worries about trees

By MARY SCHLEY

DOES THE state’s new map of fire hazard zones in Carmel mean people will have to tear down their wood fences and cut down trees? Does it mean no more wood roofs should be allowed? Will it drastically affect the look and feel of the city and its urban forest in the future?

At this point, no one really knows, but the city council on Tuesday decided to form a committee to figure it out.

Under an edict from the state, the council also voted



The city council really had no choice but to adopt the state’s new fire hazard severity map (right), but its impacts on the riskiest parts of the city — including the heavily forested north end, seen in an overhead view at left — could be far-reaching.

May 5 to adopt the new fire hazard severity map released in March by the California Fire Marshal, which designates large areas of the Monterey Peninsula as being at high risk of fire.

Major implications

Based on data compiled by Cal Fire, the new map designates 278 acres within the Carmel city limits as “very high fire hazard severity zone,” 110 acres as “high,” and 100 acres as “moderate,” planning director Anna Ginette told the council, while the rest of the city, mostly at the south end and including part of Mission Trail park, is not considered to have an elevated level of fire danger. The new map replaces the last one adopted in 2011.

installed a “high-security” mail drop-off box outside the post office at 3845 Via Nona Marie. It’s one of 15,000 beefed-up boxes the postal service has been placing around the country to counter rising mail theft.

“It’s harder to steal mail out of the new boxes,” postal service inspector Matt Norfleet told The Pine Cone. “The trade-off is that you can’t drop off as large a parcel — some things are going be too big.”

He urged residents to share their stories about mail theft with his office at (877) 876-2455. He said many residents have no idea that the postal service employs investigators — and he noted that a little information about a theft can go a long way.

“Our investigators want to know as much as they can about where these checks end up,” he explained. “Check-theft leads are very valuable to our investigators.”

The inspector noted that mail thieves are typically repeat offenders, increasing the chances they will be caught. “Mail theft is not a thing someone does just once,” he noted.

Despite the arrival of the new boxes, Norfleet urged postal customers to play it safe. “Leaving your mail in a box at 7:30 p.m. on a holiday weekend is not a good idea,” he said.

Locals lose checks

Carmel Valley resident Phyllis Cleveland said she was the victim of mail theft at the same post office. She suggested the post office should have done a better job alerting their customers to the risks.

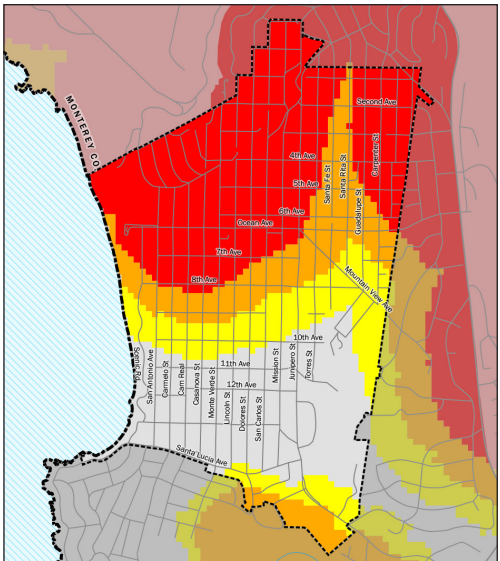
“I was mailing checks to pay bills for a nonprofit,” Cleveland explained. “I recently followed up on checks that hadn’t been deposited for months, only to find the

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The map and the Community Wildfire Protection Plan adopted by the council last fall have major implications for construction projects and landscaping under state and local laws.

No touching branches?

For instance, new and remodeled houses in the riskier areas must have fire-resistant roofs, vents that will block embers from entering, “noncombustible or ignition-resistant” exterior siding and decks, and tempered-glass



IMAGES/CAL FIRE, APPLE MAPS

windows, skylights and doors, according to the building code. Some exceptions are provided for historic buildings.

New landscaping in the high-risk areas would be limited to “fire-resistant vegetation, except for trees planted at least 30 feet from a combustible structure,” Ginette said. In a town where the standard lot size is 40 feet by 100 feet, that doesn’t leave much space for the minimum three

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Council walks back ballot measure on house numbers

■ Instead, working ‘to write the book’

By MARY SCHLEY

UNDOING A pledge made by the previous council, the Carmel City Council voted 4-1 Monday night to abandon the idea of putting the long-debated and polarizing issue of street addresses to voters in an advisory ballot measure in November.

Similar to the 2009 question to voters regarding whether to sell Flanders Mansion, the outcome would not have obligated the city to take any action, making it more of a public opinion poll. At the May 5 meeting, administrative analyst Emily Garay estimated a special election would cost taxpayers between \$40,000 and \$60,000, based on information from the Monterey County Elections department, which would administer it.

Taking it seriously

Several residents spoke against a ballot measure but urged the council to get on with the process of creating and implementing a plan that complies with the federal address management system used by the U.S. Postal Service, government agencies, financial institutions, utility companies, and navigation systems in smartphones and cars.

Betty Kullas, who has frequently spoken on the matter, lauded the council for its attentiveness. “It makes all of us who want house numbers feel very good that you’re taking this seriously,” she said, adding that a ballot measure would be a waste of time and tax dollars.

“The health and safety of our village should not be treated like it’s a public preference. It’s a responsibility,” she said. “I hope we have house numbers soon.”

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