



A celebration of the Carmel lifestyle ... inside this week!

In Your *Dreams*



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CHS tennis courts removed to make way for cars

By MARY SCHLEY

WHILE THE tennis courts at Carmel High School were “used very much by neighbors,” according to a resident who spoke at a 2022 Carmel Unified School District Board of Education meeting about proposed changes that included turning them into parking, they weren’t used much by students.

“Taking them out and putting in parking is disgusting,” the woman, who only identified herself as Susan, said at the time.

Nonetheless, that’s what’s happening.

Demolition begins

After residents complained loudly that the school’s plan to install lights at the athletic field — work that was completed in 2023 — would create parking problems in their neighborhood, the district expanded the project to provide more parking on campus, along with safer vehicle and pedestrian access. This week, crews began demolishing the tennis courts to make way for those new parking lots.

While the light posts were DarkSky certified in December 2023 — a critical environmental test clearing the way for the field’s use after dark — no night games have been played there, though some practices have.

That’s because the project’s environmental impact report contains numerous mitigation measures “to ensure safety, accessibility, and compliance with environmental

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PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Crews were busy this week working to transform the CHS tennis courts into parking areas to serve the crowds expected at its football stadium at night.

City to try valet service to ease parking woes

■ Mayor seeks end to eternal problem

By MARY SCHLEY

A PRIVATE company should be hired to offer valet service in downtown Carmel to address the chronic issue of parking congestion, the Carmel City Council decided last week. And employees should be discouraged — if not prohibited, somehow — from leaving their cars in precious spaces intended for shoppers and diners.

At a special meeting June 2, those ideas and several others, such as finding workarounds to unwind some of the changes brought about by the AB 413 Daylighting Bill that turned many corner spaces into loading zones and red zones, were made by Mayor Dale Byrne, volunteer Andrew Hooks and National Parking & Valet owner Steve Summers.

“There are a number of things we can do,” Byrne said, with some costing more and requiring more work than others, and some ostensibly costing taxpayers nothing at all.

“I personally believe every single thing on here could be done,” he said. “We need to stop talking and do something.”

Economic damage

Byrne, who led the effort and the presentation, said data he obtained indicates the city and its businesses lose 10 percent in revenue because people get frustrated while trying to find parking and then give up and leave, and others avoid the city altogether.

He also said the city could legally undo many of the changes mandated by AB 413, which banned parking near intersections to improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians. Byrne argued downtown is actually more dangerous with corner spots converted to yellow zones and red zones, because drivers find them confusing.

Hooks suggested reducing the speed limit to 15 mph within the central business district, and said parking

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\$37M project to restore Rancho floodplain

By CHRIS COUNTS

CONSTRUCTION BEGAN June 3 on an ambitious project to restore habitat along a 1-mile stretch of the lower Carmel River in Palo Corona Park, according to



PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

Floodwaters cover portions of the Rancho Cañada golf course in February 2017. A new project will turn the land into riparian habitat.

the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District. The work, which proponents say is critical to the well-being of steelhead in the river, is expected to cost about \$37 million, much of it funded by taxpayers. The project is expected to be completed by Fall 2027.

Known as the Rancho Cañada Floodplain Restoration Project, it’s intended to “transform 40 acres of a former golf course into thriving riparian habitat.”

The work includes excavating 650,000 cubic yards of fill, lowering the ground and making it easier for the river to flow into the natural floodplain during the wet season.

‘Inundated each year’

Besides benefiting steelhead, the work will improve conditions for the California red-legged frog, migratory birds and other wildlife. “The project will result in the restoration of a mile-long section of Carmel River, lowering approximately 40 acres of surrounding land to be inundated by the river each year, restoring resilient aquatic and riparian habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species,” according to a park district report.

The excavated material will be used onsite “to support other park uses and overlook viewing opportunities, smother invasive grasses, and act as sound and visual

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Panetta, Laird and Addis blame Trump for L.A. riots

By KELLY NIX and CAITLIN CONRAD

ECHOING A theme repeated by many in his party, U.S. Rep. Jimmy Panetta said this week that President Donald Trump ordered the military to Los Angeles — where thousands of people have protested and rioted over his immigration agenda — to “stir things up” and distract from his “failed” policies.

Panetta on Tuesday joined other Democrats on Capitol Hill to blast Trump’s decision to send the National Guard and Marines to L.A. to protect federal buildings and employees. The congressman claimed the president’s decisions amounted to “provocation.”

“It was Donald Trump who sent in the military to a peaceful protest,” the Carmel Valley congressman said. “It was Donald Trump who sent in the military to basically stir things up and give him the image, the fight and the pictures that he wants.”

Panetta said Democrats in Congress support immigrants and the U.S. Constitution’s limits on presidential power.

“We will stand with the protesters who do it in a peaceful way, and continue to push back on this administration,” Panetta said. “And we will stand shoulder to shoulder, as you see up here today, because we are willing to go toe to toe with the president of the United States.”

‘Threat to democracy’

In an interview with MSNBC Wednesday, Panetta said gang members and violent criminals have “got to go,” but he defended “hardworking immigrants,” including those in agriculture, construction and healthcare.

“When you have a president come in with these types of heavy-handed measures and this broad swath of going after others, of course you’re going to see protests,” Panetta said, adding, “that’s why you’re seeing these protests in a peaceful manner.”

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RESTAURANT MANAGER DETAINED BY ICE

■ Multiple DUIs and other legal ills

By KELLY NIX

THE OWNERS of a Pacific Grove restaurant are pleading for the public’s help after the eatery’s manager — a native of El Salvador who married an American citizen — was detained by immigration officials last week and could be deported to his home country.

Juan Carlos Contreras, 43, was taken into custody by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials June 4, according to the owners of Wild Fish on Lighthouse Avenue, where he’s worked for five years. While Contreras has lived in the United States for about 25 years, immigration officials have started efforts to deport him.

“Our server and long-time manager, known to most of you as JC, went to a routine ICE check-in on June 4 and was arrested,” the owners of the seafood place said.



PHOTO/WILD FISH

Juan Carlos Contreras, in a photo distributed by the restaurant where he works.

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