



Special Section inside this week Concours WEEK

AUGUST 8-17, 2025



The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 111 No. 33

<https://carmelpinecone.com>

August 15-21, 2025

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

WONDERCARS IMPRESS ON STREETS AND TRACK



PHOTO/(ABOVE AND TOP RIGHT) KERRY BELSER, (RIGHT) MICHAEL TROUTMAN

As Car Week got into full swing, F1 cars took over the track at Laguna Seca (right), classic beauties like this 1937 Bugatti tackled the Tour d'Elegance (above), and a spectator or two ran afoul of the law in downtown Carmel while showing off their own hot wheels (top right). For complete coverage, see our special section inside.



City mum on Pastor's frustration, but others commiserate

By MARY SCHLEY

FOLLOWING LAST week's marathon meeting in which three members of the Carmel City Council sided with opponents of Patrice Pastor's project on Dolores south of Seventh — and after Pastor's subsequent pronouncement that he is fed up with the city and will take his business elsewhere — those involved on both sides are keeping their lips zipped.

"There's now apparently pending litigation, so in light of that, I'm not going to comment at this point," said councilman Hans Buder, one of the three who spent hours last Monday deliberating over 11 residents' objections to the residential/commercial development Pastor has proposed for three lots south of the Seventh & Dolores Steakhouse. It is unclear what litigation he was referring to.

Similarly, councilman Jeff Baron, city administrator Chip Rerig and assistant city administrator Brandon Swanson chose not to comment, as did Pastor and Esperanza Carmel managing director Chris Mitchell.

But others are saying plenty. "Ninety percent of the comments I've received, or maybe more, have been very negative about what's been done to Pastor," said Mayor Dale Byrne, who recused himself from last Monday's appeal hearing because Pastor made a contribution to the nonprofit he founded, Carmel Cares, 16 months earlier. "Some people are actually quite angry about it."

'How sad'

Numerous people who submitted letters to the editor of The Pine Cone decried what they see as shabby treatment of Pastor.

"How sad that a dozen residents can cause the overturn of the significant contributions Patrice Pastor has been making to our community," Carmel resident Sandra Berris wrote. "After years of continuous nitpicking, I can't blame

See PASTOR page 16A

CPUC hands Cal Am major victory in desal dispute

■ Supports company's demand estimate

By KELLY NIX

A POWERFUL state agency this week agreed with California American Water's long-term water supply estimates for the Monterey Peninsula, moving the utility a step closer to realizing its "drought-proof" desalination plant. Cal Am expects to break ground on the project by the end of this year.

First mention —

'The Concours is my favorite event'

By ELAINE HESSER

WHEN JAY Leno first came to The Pine Cone's attention on July 28, 1988, it had nothing to do with cars — or Carmel, for that matter. An entertainment column noted that the comedian, who was the regular guest host for Johnny Carson on "The Tonight Show," would be performing at the California Mid-State Fair in Paso Robles. A few years later, readers were alerted that Leno was part of Paul Masson winery's summer entertainment series.

NBC announced in June 1991 that Carson would retire the following year and Leno would be his successor. Two months later, Leno — whose celebrity status had taken a steep upswing — attended the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

As we all soon learned, the heir to Carson's throne is a longtime collector and restorer of classic automobiles,

See LENO page 17A

On Thursday afternoon, the California Public Utilities Commission unanimously OK'd a recommendation by its staff to approve a projected 2050 water demand for the Peninsula of 13,732 acre-feet per year — a threshold Cal Am says only desal can meet. While the utility still must meet other conditions set by the California Coastal Commission before it can start building the plant, the CPUC decision is a big win for the company.

'Water security'

"Today's decision confirms the Monterey Peninsula needs additional water supply to meet customer demands today, tomorrow and well into the future to provide water security," Cal Am President Kevin Tilden said shortly after the vote.

The CPUC concluded that the Peninsula faces a water

See CPUC page 13A

Battery removal gets started at Vistra plant

■ 'Flare-ups' possible

By KELLY NIX

A YEAR-LONG effort to remove tens of thousands of batteries damaged in a January fire at a Vistra Energy battery storage facility in Moss Landing is set to begin next month, officials said this week.

Vistra will start removing the lithium-ion batteries under an agreement with the Environmental Protection Agency, which will oversee the operation, EPA coordinator Kazami Brockman told reporters.

On Jan. 16, a catastrophic fire broke out at the battery facility, leading to the evacuation of as many as 1,500 people from the Moss Landing area. Many complained of illness from the smoke.

More than a year

Brockman said that crews will partially demolish and stabilize the heavily damaged building before Vistra starts the removal. Preparation for the work has already begun, and people should expect to see construction vehicles,

See BATTERIES page 30A

Isn't my baby the cutest thing?



PHOTO/SARA COURTNIDGE

This proud mother had just given birth to a pup at Point Lobos State Natural Reserve minutes before this photo was taken. Docent Sara Courtneidge used a telephoto lens to capture several stunning images. See page 12A.