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Police shooting lawsuit headed for mediation

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY of Carmel and the woman who filed suit after police fatally shot her son nearly a year ago might be in settlement talks, according to recent court filings. Ellen Barrett's lawsuit against the city, filed in U.S. District Court, is scheduled for discussion during the city council's closed session Monday, and a mediation session is set for early December.

The suit, filed in July, accuses police officers, including former Chief Paul Tomasi, of violating state and federal laws by using "excessive and unreasonable force" in the shooting of 27-year-old James Marshall near the Golden Bough Theater on Oct. 25, 2024.

'Assault-style' BB gun

That morning, Marshall was seen carrying an assault-rifle-style BB gun and a crowbar in the area near the Monte Verde Street home he shared with his mother and reportedly threatened people before retreating to the backyard, where he was eventually shot.

Bodycam footage shows many of the events leading up to the shooting, including the final moments in which

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New law means big cuts to county health services

By KELLY NIX

MONTEREY COUNTY stands to lose millions of dollars to pay for healthcare for undocumented immigrants and other social services, according to county officials, who this week outlined some of the anticipated impacts of the so-called One Big Beautiful Bill on the county and its residents. Congressional Republicans approved the bill and President Donald Trump signed it on July 4.

At the Monterey County Board of Supervisors meeting Tuesday, the heads of the county's public hospital, social services and health departments provided summaries of the estimated cuts to Medicaid, CalFresh and other programs that are expected to affect county residents.

The law "is still something that is being reviewed federally, but we wanted to start the conversation so that there is a little bit of perspective that is individual to the county," county administrative officer Sonia De La Rosa told supervisors ahead of the presentations.

Asset limit

Social services director Roderick Franks said Monterey County will first feel the impacts of the law on Jan. 1, 2026, with a reinstatement of a "Medi-Cal asset limit," which will require some enrollees to demonstrate they don't have assets exceeding $130,000 (for individuals), excluding primary residences and cars. The asset limit could affect about 13,000 residents.

"Our concern here is that for the last number of years, enrollees haven't had to turn in the documentation to certify the asset limit," Franks said. So even though they may still qualify, "we are concerned people may not turn in the documentation that is required and may be dropped from Medi-Cal."

About 39,000 residents in Monterey County who receive Medi-Cal benefits — which include medical care, prescriptions, mental health services, dental care and eyeglasses — have what officials call "unsatisfactory immigration status," meaning they are undocumented.

District 3 Supervisor Chris Lopez said that some of his constituents in South Monterey County have expressed concern that the law means they'll automatically lose

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PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

An emergency patient arrives at Natividad Medical Center in Salinas. Trump administration cutbacks endanger services at the hospital, county officials say.

READY TO START FLOWING

PHOTO/PURE WATER MONTEREY

Phase 2 of the Monterey Peninsula's reclamation project is ready to start supplying water to homes and businesses. See page 13A.

CSUMB, Panetta decry end of $$$ for Latino students

By KELLY NIX

CARMEL VALLEY Rep. Jimmy Panetta and his Democratic colleagues pushed back this week on the federal government's decision earlier this month to stop funding college grant programs it says are racially discriminatory. CSU Monterey Bay said Wednesday that the decision threatens programs that "uplift" Hispanic students.

The U.S. Department of Education announced Sept. 10 it would divert hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars from Hispanic-serving institutions — colleges which have at least 25 percent students who are Hispanic — to other programs. The Trump administration said it's ending the funding to such colleges because they "discriminate by conferring government benefits exclusively to institutions that meet racial or ethnic quotas."

The government's move follows the U.S. Solicitor General's determination in July that the programs at Hispanic-serving institutions "violate the equal-protection component of the Fifth Amendment's Due Process Clause" because it excludes students of other races. U.S. Secretary of Education Linda McMahon also said the grant programs were unconstitutional.

'Disproportionate harm'

"Discrimination based upon race or ethnicity has no place in the United States," said McMahon, adding that, "Diversity is not merely the presence of a skin color. Stereotyping an individual based on immutable characteristics diminishes the full picture of that person's life and contributions, including their character, resiliency and merit."

Panetta and 80 other members of Congress sent a letter to McMahon opposing the removal of funds from Hispanic-serving institutions, as well as from programs that favor other minorities, arguing that the taxpayer money

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Phonics poised to return to California classrooms

Capitol Access

By CAITLIN CONRAD

AFTER YEARS of failing to teach children how to read, California is bringing back the basics in literacy instruction with a return to phonics. In a rare show of bipartisanship, Sacramento lawmakers unanimously approved a bill this session that will require the use of phonics in reading instruction at public schools.

The change can't come soon enough. Last year, 60 percent of third graders were not reading at grade level. The numbers are even worse for some groups, with 70 percent of Black and low-income students failing to meet the state's standard in 2024, with data showing that children who are behind in third grade are unlikely to catch up.

The dismal numbers are nothing new. The literacy crisis has persisted at this level for decades, and only as other states decided to return to phonics did California lawmakers realize it's a good idea.

Traditional method

Up until the 1980s, most children in California and across the nation were taught to read using phonics-based instruction, a system that helps beginning readers decode words by sounding them out. Over time, however, that approach fell out of fashion, replaced by something called the "balanced literacy" approach.

Balanced literacy has been around for the last 20-plus years, and the method is rooted in the idea that exposing children to a literacy-rich environment would get them reading organically. Teachers were trained to use memorization, sight word recognition and guesswork to teach kids to read.

If this sounds bizarre, that's because it is. In fact, it's worth a deep dive on YouTube to see the approach in

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PHOTO/PINE CONE FILE

California students score poorly on reading tests, but a return to traditional teaching methods could be coming to classrooms.

CITY REPORTS RECORD HOTEL TAX REVENUES

By MARY SCHLEY

TAXES PAID by guests at the city's hotels reached a new high in fiscal year 2024-2025, breaking the $9 million mark, nearly 12 percent above the prior year's total, according to the city's finance department, even though daily occupancy for the year rose just over 3 percent.

The biggest single-period jump in transient occupancy taxes was seen in July and August of last year, when receipts increased 17.37 percent, to $2,290,176, over the same months a year earlier, according to reports released in mid-September.

Big increase

In fact, every two-month period in 2024-2025 saw improvement over the prior fiscal year, with the smallest rise of 5.52 percent occurring in September and October 2024. In May and June of this year, hotels generated $1,724,774 in taxes, an 11.09 percent rise over those months a year earlier.

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