

The Carmel Pine Cone

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City wasn't told beach was closed by sewage spill

By MARY SCHLEY

A SMALL sewage spill on the afternoon of Oct. 22 led the Monterey County health department to shut down all of Carmel Beach the following day — but city officials were unaware of the closure until residents noticed the posting early last Thursday evening and inquired. The lack of communication irked city administrator Chip Rerig and others, while the sewer district said it was the county health department's job to tell the city about the closure.

"We do not own our sewage system, thank goodness," city administrator Chip Rerig said in a video Friday afternoon, two days after the spill and a day after the closure. "We're the stewards of a mile-long, beautiful stretch of beach in the National Marine Sanctuary, and we got a picture yesterday of a sign posted closing our beach."

Delayed reaction

Nearly 48 hours after the spill, the Carmel Area Wastewater District released a statement that it had told the county's environmental health department that a "small sewage spill" estimated at 50 to 100 gallons had entered the water at the south end of Carmel Beach due to a mechanical failure in its system.

While such a spill is tiny in the vastness of Carmel Bay, it could have impacts in the immediate area, and district officials said the agency responded to the spill within 10 minutes of being notified. And it could have been worse.

"The collections team quickly contained and recovered 800 gallons of the approximately 850-gallon spill," the sewer district said in a statement. "Unfortunately, an estimated 40 to 50 gallons reached the rocky tidepool area," initiating the agency's required notifications to the California Office of Emergency Services and the county health department — but not the city.

Bar owner questioned A.W. Shucks permits

By MARY SCHLEY

WHILE HE denied being the instigator of a city inquiry into whether A.W. Shucks is operating in compliance with its use permit, Parker Logan, owner of Sade's bar on Lincoln south of Ocean, raised the question nearly eight months ago, according to public records. The Ocean Avenue business is one of three legally designated



Parker Logan

"drinking establishments" in Carmel, even though it functions more as a restaurant than as a bar, and the planning commission last month was asked to decide which way to classify it.

The city "received correspondence questioning whether or not the operation is legal and whether or not the operation is in violation of the conditions of approval in the use permit resolution," planning director Anna Ginette said at the Oct. 8 Carmel Planning Commission meeting.

Stripping A.W. Shucks of its bar permit could benefit someone else who wants to open a drinking place in the city. Logan is losing his lease and can't relocate, since the bar permit belongs to the landlord, though he owns the liquor license.

'Extreme violation'

After the hearing, Logan told The Pine Cone he was not the unnamed person who complained about A.W. Shucks' operations, but in a March 11 email to assistant city administrator Brandon Swanson, he wrote, "It has come to my understanding that A.W. Shucks is under extreme

Metal drapes deployed in battle against rocks



PHOTO/CALTRANS

At Regent's Slide in Big Sur, workers are using every trick in the book to stabilize the hillside and get the highway open — including hanging curtains made of wire mesh. See page 15A.

"As a result, Carmel Beach has been closed and will remain closed until samples indicate that the water is again safe for contact according to state guidelines," the sewer district announced Friday afternoon.

'Almost inexcusable'

The facts that nobody told the city about the spill when it occurred Wednesday afternoon and that officials only learned of it after the county closed the beach and someone asked about one of the "Warning! Keep out!" signs Thursday afternoon were unacceptable to Rerig.

"Failed communication in local government is almost

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violation of their use permit. I believe it states that if they were to violate, it would be reabsorbed by the city. Can you look into the use permit and confirm?"

The business license issued to owner Karen Basi after she and her husband bought A.W. Shucks in 2023 lists

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Politicians, charities brace for SNAP loss

By KELLY NIX

TENS OF thousands of people in the 19th Congressional District, which includes part of Monterey County, are at risk of losing food stamps this weekend if politicians on Capitol Hill don't agree on a spending bill to reopen the federal government, officials said this week.

Democratic Rep. Jimmy Panetta late last week warned of the lapse in monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, or food stamps, in his district, and he joined fellow Democrats in calling for U.S. Department of Agriculture Sec. Brooke Rollins to use reserves to fully fund SNAP benefits, which won't be distributed if the government remains closed Nov. 1.

All opposed

The latest effort to reopen the government failed Tuesday night when 45 senators — all Democrats — opposed it.

"Working families could face even more uncertainty about whether they will be able to put food on the table," Panetta said.

The reserve is used to make up for funding gaps

See SNAP page 17A

Rerig to retire as city administrator

By MARY SCHLEY

NEARLY A decade after his return to Carmel on what he frequently refers to as his "second offense," city administrator Chip Rerig this week announced he will leave city hall at the end of the year.

And unlike when most soon-to-be retirees say it, he really is planning to spend more time with his family — in Bologna, Italy, where his daughter, Rocket, is attending school.

"I am excited to share that I have a plan to spend as much time as possible with my teenage daughter before she graduates from high school, and with my wife, who has worked remotely in local government for the past several years," Rerig said in a Wednesday email to his staff announcing his decision.

"This opportunity to spend time with Rocket is paramount and has to take precedence over my desire to be here for another couple of years," he told The Pine Cone Thursday. He and his family live in Pacific Grove, but he'll head to Italy as soon as he can.



Chip Rerig

Fatherly duties

"I'll be making my daughter breakfast and walking her to school every day," Rerig said, adding that he believes she might be the only American, and is certainly the only Californian, at the International School of Bologna.

Rerig, 59, worked in Carmel's planning department

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Polls predict win for Prop 50

A NEW poll shows more than half of likely voters plan to check "yes" on Proposition 50 in Tuesday's election. The survey conducted this month by the Public Policy Institute of California shows 56 percent support the initiative to redraw California's congressional maps, a shift from August when support for the Democratic gerrymandering hovered just below 50 percent.

Republican opponents of the initiative seem to have taken their foot off the gas in the week before the election,

Capitol Access

By CAITLIN CONRAD

with Prop 50 supporters reporting more than double the campaign expenditures of their opponents.

The race to reconfigure California's House districts in favor of Democrats has been run as a referendum against President Donald Trump, and it's working. Ninety-five percent of the voters who said they planned to support the measure said they also disapprove of how Trump is handling his job, while 86 percent approve of Gov. Gavin Newsom's performance.

If voters approve Prop 50, they'll replace California's congressional district map, which was drawn by a non-partisan commission, with one Democrats drew behind closed doors. The map could shift up to five congressional seats to Democrats, who already control 43 out

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