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Electrical upgrades will cut outages in half, PG&E says

By KELLY NIX

PG&E OFFICIALS said last week that the company is close to completing a “modernization” of its Monterey substation, which the utility maintained would increase electrical capacity and cut power outages on the Peninsula by an impressive 50 percent.

On Jan. 14, representatives with PG&E told journalists

that the upgrades to the substation on Del Monte Avenue, which began last fall, should be completed in a few months. They include a 30-megavolt-ampere transformer to replace one with a capacity of 10-megavolt-amperes, the installation of 3,800 feet of new underground cable, and other work.

“It will ultimately be a \$40 million project to upgrade the substation and surrounding areas,” PG&E spokesman Mike McCarty told reporters.

Like new

While PG&E’s intent was to upgrade the substation, McCarty said it’s more like a new facility because crews are also converting its output from 4 kilovolts to 21 kilovolts, which will bring it in line with modern distribution standards and make it easier to maintain.

“The end result is an increase in the electrical distribution capacity in the area and an increase in reliability to both our distribution and transmission systems,” he said. “On the capacity side, a project like this is the equivalent of powering 7,500 homes.”

The added capacity is expected to support electric vehicle charging infrastructure and make it easier for new developments to connect to the grid.

The facility will allow for growth and decrease power outages by 50 percent. Pacific Grove residents will be pleased to

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Appeal board stymied by cost of Mad Dogs’ restrooms, sprinklers

By MARY SCHLEY

IN A rare meeting of the Carmel Building Code Board of Appeals Friday, the panel stopped short of forcing Mad Dogs & Englishmen owner Jennifer Blevins to bring her Ocean Avenue coffee shop into compliance with codes requiring an accessible restroom and fire sprinklers.

Instead, they voted to put off a decision while she tries to find a solution that doesn’t involve installing fire sprinklers and a public bathroom, since she said doing so would force the closure of her business.

Blevins and her husband, Martin, opened their bike shop in a space on Mission near Ocean in 2018, and a few years later took over the storefront above, expanding into it and then getting approval to sell coffee drinks as a small part of the business.

They received permits for minor electrical and plumbing work to accommodate the coffee bar in February 2024. In December of that year, after someone noted the purported ancillary use had become the dominant activity, they received a unanimous OK from the planning commission to officially operate as a coffee shop.

Changing type of business triggers new requirements

Boxes unchecked

Conditions of that approval included amending the business license to show the new use, receiving a certificate of occupancy from the building department, and making at least one restroom “available for use by all persons within, or conveniently adjacent to, the specific business premises and on the same property on which the use is located.” When the planning commission considered the application, senior planner Evan Kort noted, “As described by the applicant, there is one unisex ADA-compliant employee restroom that will be available for customers to use during operating hours.”

But the owners have not amended the business license or obtained a certificate of occupancy, and the restroom remains available only to employees. In addition, building official Jermel Laurie and Monterey Fire Division Chief Justin Cooper said changing the type of business triggered

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VALLEY ‘ROCKED’ BY PLAN FOR 90 NEW HOMES

By CHRIS COUNTS

IN CARMEL Valley — where major housing projects are few and far between, but where state mandates have opened the door for previously unheard-of levels of development — a plan to build 90 homes at the site of the former Carmel Valley Airport has been submitted to Monterey County for review, planning official Craig Spencer confirmed.

“We have received a preliminary application, which is a step before a full application, for a 90-unit housing

development at 65 El Caminito in Carmel Valley,” Spencer said.

While he identified the property owner as 27380 Schulte Road LLC, a 2022 Carmel Pine Cone article indicated the owner is Ken Griggs of Griggs Nursery, who bought it from the Del Fino family in 2020. Griggs was contacted for this article but didn’t respond.

Builder’s remedy

According to county records, the site is 17.44 acres, and the project includes “an additional 6.36 acres of street improvements and 5.5 acres of improved open space.”

It’s uncertain what the breakdown of homes vs. townhouses vs. apartments might be. County records note that the developer plans to use the builder’s remedy, which

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As refineries shut down, state turns to Asia for fuel

WHILE GOV. Gavin Newsom was campaigning in Switzerland this week, bragging about his climate leadership, one detail he failed to mention is the increase in global emissions the world can thank him for this year. “California didn’t reach 2.5 million zero-emission

Capitol Access

By CAITLIN CONRAD

vehicles by accident — we invested in this future when others said it was impossible,” said Newsom at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

True, zero-emission vehicle sales in California have surpassed 2.55 million, an achievement that definitely wasn’t an accident. The state’s lofty climate goals — including a questionable legal ban on sales of new gas-powered cars by 2035 — have gotten more people into

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County praises employee for aiding stranded horse

By CHRIS COUNTS

A QUICK-thinking Monterey County employee was recognized last week for the efforts he took to avert disaster after a truck transporting a horse broke down in traffic.

Micah Beardsall — an administrative operations manager for Monterey County Parks — was driving behind Charlie Sammut along Highway 68 Oct. 30 when he watched the latter attempt to make a left turn onto Olmstead off the highway. Sammut’s truck was pulling a trailer carrying “a newly adopted 4-year-old horse for the first time.”

“Sammut’s truck suddenly lost all clutch hydraulics, leaving the truck and horse trailer stranded in the turn lane,” Monterey County reported in its January newsletter.

Precarious situation

As a result, Sammut found himself “in a precarious situation, unable to move the rig and concerned for the safety of the young horse inside the trailer.”

“Quickly recognizing the seriousness of the situation,”

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PHOTO/MONTEREY COUNTY

Monterey Zoo founder Charlie Sammut and his horse, Captain Crunch, were recently aided by a Good Samaritan.