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TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Jury awards nearly \$19M in Pt. Lobos crash

■ Volunteer deemed an employee

By KELLY NIX

A FORMER Rhode Island city councilwoman who was nearly killed at Point Lobos when a docent driving an electric vehicle crashed into her was awarded more than \$18 million Wednesday by a Monterey County jury.

Helen Anthony was in a crosswalk at Point Lobos State

Natural Reserve on June 10, 2023, when a docent, identified as Jack Duncan Arnold, then 82 years old, crashed into her. Anthony, a member of the Providence City Council at the time, was rushed to a Salinas hospital with major head and chest injuries. Claiming negligence and other causes of action, on Dec. 14, 2023, she filed a lawsuit against the California Department of Parks and Recreation, Arnold,

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Commission deadlocks on cypress removal

■ No mention of state's fire mandates

By MARY SCHLEY

A 60-FOOT-TALL, 200-year-old, 77-inch-diameter Monterey Cypress on Carmelo Street is either fine, or it's in failing health and therefore an imminent threat to nearby people and property, depending on which arborist is being asked. Last Thursday, the Carmel Forest and Beach Commission considered a request from the tree's owner to cut it down but split 2-2 on whether to allow it, leaving the debate and decision for another day.

Arborists disagree whether 200-year-old tree is ready to fall

City forester Justin Ono told commissioners Feb. 19 that he'd been asked to assess the tree in May 2025, while construction of a new house on the lot was underway, and he "found the tree to be in fair condition and was not overly concerned with the health or stability of the tree."

But two months later, after Tope's Tree Service did some pruning and requested that another arborist evaluate the tree, Albert Weisfuss assessed it and concluded it's in poor health and should be removed. Ono subsequently denied owners John Brookes' and Kelly Meldrum's application to cut the tree down, and in November 2025, the couple "reopened the tree assessment for the purpose of appealing the decision" to the commission, he said.

"Staff believes this removal is inconsistent with the municipal code because the tree does not constitute a threat to public safety," Ono said in his report.

High risk

Weisfuss, however, painted a different picture, concluding it's probable the tree will fall and is therefore considered high risk.

"The subject tree exhibits multiple structural deficiencies that significantly compromise its stability and health," he said in his report, citing a sparse canopy that contains dead twigs and foliage, several "over-extended limbs" that could fail, and "advanced decay" in multiple areas of the trunk, "as confirmed through probing, sounding and

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PHOTOS/(LEFT) CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS, (ABOVE) PROVIDENCE CITY COUNCIL Security video (left) shows a van driven by docent striking Helen Anthony (shown above before the accident) in a Point Lobos crosswalk.

County may allow marijuana use where it's sold

By CHRIS COUNTS

IF THE wine industry can rake in millions of dollars from tasting rooms, why can't the cannabis industry do the same? That question looms over a proposal to make it legal for marijuana sellers to let customers sample products in their stores.

The Monterey County Planning Commission hosted a workshop Wednesday on the idea, giving commissioners and residents a chance to comment. While some raised tough questions, most who spoke seemed supportive.

A county report says staff have drafted ordinances "that would allow existing and future permitted marijuana retailers to also include consumption on site if they can meet all the requirements." The rules focus on ventilation, ensuring a safe environment for employees, customers and the public, and addressing odor control by requiring businesses to ensure the smell is not detected off site.

Easy permits

According to a draft of the new rules, a vendor who wants to host indoor pot consumption would only need an over-the-counter permit, while one seeking to offer outdoor consumption would need one that might trigger public hearings.

County official Mike Novo, who gave a presentation on the topic, made the case for allowing marijuana use onsite

at shops that sell it.

"Cannabis is a legal drug right now," Novo said. "A lot of people are consuming it illegally because they don't

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C.V. snowfall has locals pleading, 'stay away'

By CHRIS COUNTS

FOR SOME who live in the Monterey Peninsula but miss experiencing four distinct seasons, the temptation to drive to Upper Carmel Valley — especially up Tassajara Road when it snows on Chews Ridge — is apparently so great that they can't let a road closure get in their way.

After snow fell last week on the ridge — which tops out at just above 5,000 feet — county officials closed the road near Jamesburg to all but local traffic as a precaution. According to the county, the closure was requested Feb. 18 by law enforcement due to "safety and road concerns." But that didn't stop many people from going to the snow. Describing the scene, a resident

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Democrats look to corporations to plug deficit

CALIFORNIA LAWMAKERS are searching for ways to fill a massive hole in the state budget driven by chronic deficits and cuts to federal funding. For some, raising taxes on businesses looks like the answer.

millions of Californians, including giants like Apple, Intel and Qualcomm, all of which have foreign subsidiaries and could face significantly higher tax bills — if they choose to stay headquartered in California.

Until 1986, California required multinationals to report all income, including profits earned overseas. Connolly's bill would return California to a similar system, which hasn't seen popular support in decades.

'Profits have soared'

"For the last 40 years, California has allowed the biggest corporations to choose a tax scheme that ensures they pay as little in taxes as possible," said the San Rafael Democrat. "Even as corporate profits have soared and the federal government has cut corporate tax rates to historic lows, these companies still stash profits overseas to avoid paying billions in state taxes each year."

With the Water's Edge Election, corporations paid \$38.7 billion more in taxes last year than in 1986, thanks in part to California's 8.4 percent corporate tax rate — the nation's third highest.

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Capitol Access

By CAITLIN CONRAD

Assemblymember Damon Connolly has proposed the first major tax increase of the year with legislation to eliminate what is called the "Water's Edge Election" — an idea that has been introduced before but gone nowhere in Sacramento.

The Water's Edge Election allows multinational companies based in California to limit the amount of foreign income they include when calculating their California taxes. Under Connolly's AB 1790, any portion of overseas profits would be subject to state taxation.

This change would affect businesses employing

Doc's lab set for ADA upgrades



PHOTO/PAUL MILLER

This building made famous in John Steinbeck's "Cannery Row" should be renovated so disabled people can visit, Monterey officials said. See page 8A.