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Palo Alto expects budget woes, green momentum in 2010

Stanford Hospital expansion, future of composting and Comprehensive Plan upgrade to dominate city agendas by Gennady Sheyner

Depending on whom you ask, 2010 will either be a year of painful adjustments in Palo Alto or a time of unprecedented opportunities.

For members of the City Council, it promises to be a bit of both.

With the city facing a structural budget deficit of about $10 million and just about every major revenue source on the wane, city officials are bracing for service cuts, tough negotiations with labor unions and a growing infrastructure backlog.

The city’s quest for new police headquarters has stalled and is back to square one; its largest labor union is reporting a crisis of morale; and downtown’s vacancy rate is hovering around double digits for the first time in recent memory.

But city officials also told the Weekly they have reasons for optimism. After a disastrous 2009, business leaders expect some of the empty buildings on University Avenue to start filling up in early 2010. Palo Alto expects to make significant progress in the coming year on rebuilding its libraries at bargain-basement construction prices. City Council members also hope that some of the green initiatives the city has recently undertaken will bring both environmental and economic benefits to the city.

“There’s both an uncertain future ahead and a window of opportunity,” Mayor Peter Drekmeier said. “We’ve got great resources, great minds and people who are very dedicated to helping out, which could be a huge boost.”

Drekmeier, who is concluding his council term this month along with council members Yoriko Kishimoto, Jack Morton and John Barton, said he expects budget issues to dominate council agendas throughout 2010. This includes negotiations with the Service Employees International Union, which represents 617 city workers.

(continued on page 7)

EDUCATION

Schools look to growth, budget cuts

Kickoff of ‘Springboard to Kindergarten’ gives year a happy start by Chris Kennick

Palo Alto schools will open the new year with a fresh dose of childish enthusiasm.

Springboard to Kindergarten, a “crash course in kindergarten readiness,” will be launched in January.

With rising enrollment and shrinking revenues, cuts will be necessary even if voters this spring renew and boost the parcel tax that provides 6 percent of the district’s operating budget, school leaders say.

Palo Alto’s 17 schools are seeking ways to bridge an anticipated $5.1 million “structural deficit” in the district’s $154 million operating budget for 2010-11.

“l’s a challenge to shrink the budget knowing that 85 percent of it is your staff,” school board member Camille Townsend said this week.

“The strength of our program is in our staff.”

The school district is seeking the public’s budget-cutting suggestions by e-mail at balancedbudget@pausd.org. Officials will gather the ideas for a school-board study session to be scheduled early in the year.

Schools already have saved more than $2 million through an informal hiring freeze, a slight increase in class sizes, swimming-pool closures and reduced food budgets.

Palo Alto does not get additional state revenue even if enrollment goes up because it is funded under the “basic aid” formula, which is based on property taxes.

The district educates 11,565 students in 12 elementary schools,

(continued on page 5)
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There’s both an uncertain future ahead and a window of opportunity.
— Peter Drekmeyer, Palo Alto mayor, on what the city council will be facing in 2010. See story on page 3.

Around Town

OFS DOGS AND MEN ... Dog people, unite! Pretty please?
That’s a request from Palo Alto’s recreation officials, who have been debating ways to create more play space in the city for local dogs and dog owners. Last month, about 100 people (including six who don’t own dogs) attended a meeting on the subject organized by the Parks and Recreation Commission and staff from the Community Services Department. At its Dec. 15 meeting, the commission digested the feedback from the public and agreed with a staff suggestion to explore ways in which users of local fields can coexist with dogs. One of the challenges has been discovering that the scattered nature of local dog owners. Unlike bicyclists and athletic groups, dog owners do not have a coherent team or organization that the city can tap for assistance. Rob de Geus, the city’s golf and recreation manager, said the city will attempt to change that. “We’ll see what we can do to get the dog owners organized in some fashion,” he said. “We’ll reach out to them and give them some guidance and some of the history we’ve had with field users and other groups who pulled together on a particular topic to find solutions.”

PLAY NICE, PEOPLE ... Palo Alto’s tense negotiations with its largest workers’ union are set to resume on Jan. 11, when city representatives and Service Employees International Union negotiators are scheduled to meet in a closed session. The negotiations ended on an acrimonious note in November, when the City Council voted to forego negotiation and impose new conditions on the union, which represents 617 city workers. Earlier this month, Greg Schultz, a former City Utilities Department and a negotiator for the union, told the City Council that the imposed conditions (which create a less lucrative pension formula for new hires and force employees to contribute to their health care) have made it difficult for the department to attract new employees. “When your lights are out and we can’t get anyone to get in, hold the candle to the mirror,” Schultz said. “Your guys are responsible because we can’t hire anybody.” City officials, meanwhile, are still scrambling to cut costs in order to close a $9.4 million deficit in the current fiscal year. The tense atmosphere has promoted the city’s Human Relations Commission to put out a special memo asking the two sides to respect one another and to avoid stereotypes. “Though poorly structured, collective bargaining and those involved in it exist in a context,” the memo stated. “The elements of the context that the HRC would like to emphasize in this letter to the Palo Alto community, namely, the danger of stereotypes, the essential importance of respect, the meaning of work, and the many-sided significance of community, we believe, careful and continuous consideration now and in the future.”

THE COLORS OF PALO ALTO...
Want to show your Palo Alto spirit? Whip out your favorite HSV/68, 53, 37 sweater, or perhaps a patch of “Oh Joe-green,” won. Earlier this month, Yates took photos of all 12,729 parcels in the city, tallied up the average color of the parcels through four different methodologies (mode of means, mean of means, mode of modes, and then had voters choose the color they like best. Mean of modes, which can be described by a non-artist as “GI Joe-green,” won. Earlier this month, Yates earned a standing ovation from the City Council and members of the public for his efforts. He also went through a list of options the city has, now that it has official colors and a photo catalogue of every parcel. City officials can now tally up the number of white picket fences and basketball hoops around town. They can also promote Palo Alto’s colors through clothing patterns and paint colors. But Yates said he struggled with the question of whether the “mean of modes” is in fact more Palo Alto than the other three “average” colors, the vote notwithstanding. “We have the people’s choice, but in the end all of these are equally valid answers,” Yates said.

About the choices,
Palo Alto may soon become a laboratory for studying the impacts of union wages on local capital projects. A City Council committee has recommended a pilot study that would weigh local wage policies.

The study should help the City Council determine whether to adopt a prevailing-wage policy for local projects, members of the council's most vehement advocates said at a Dec. 15 committee meeting. Most California cities are already obligated to have such a policy, but Palo Alto is exempt from the requirement because of its status as a charter city.

Some members of the council have long argued that the city is morally obligated to make sure contractors on public projects provide adequate training, health insurance and retirement packages for their workers — factors that are typically associated with union wages. Councilman John Barton, whose term concluded in December, has been the council's most vehement advocate for a prevailing-wage policy.

The pilot study, which the committee endorsed by a 3-0 vote, could serve as a powerful tool, Barton said, particularly if the city collaborates with Stanford University statisticians and other local experts to carefully evaluate the gathered data. The full council would have to approve the study before it's initiated. Among the most critical questions the study would evaluate is the cost of requiring a prevailing-wage policy. Staff from the Public Works Department estimated that requiring a prevailing-wage policy for more than a year — a debate that has pitted its members' moral considerations against their fiscal responsibilities.

Palo Alto is already wrestling with a $3.6 million deficit in the current fiscal year, and the council is expected to institute service cuts in the coming months to ward off wider budget gaps in future years. "If we find almost no or little difference in costs, I'd assume that Palo Alto will be very happy to go in the direction of prevailing wages," said Councilwoman Yoriko Kishimoto, who is also on the Policy and Services Committee.

Mike Sartor, assistant director of the Public Works Department, said the pilot study would include specific projects the city expects to ask for bids on in the spring.

Sartor said the city also plans to mail out surveys to the various bidding contractors to determine what types of wages, benefits, training and work environment they offer their workers.

If adopted, the prevailing-wage policy could affect local projects such as Greer Park improvements, library renovations and storm-drain rehabilitation.

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be e-mailed at gsheyner@paweekly.com.
Learn the Guitar this Winter

Carol McComb’s “Starting to Play” workshop includes the FREE use of a Loaner Guitar for the duration of the classes. Regular cost is just $180 for nine weeks of group lessons, and all music is included.

*Starting to Play* meets for one hour each Monday night for nine weeks beginning January 4. Students are encouraged to bring their own guitar, but both nylon-string and steel-string loaner guitars are available. Other classes at more advanced levels are also offered. A full brochure is available at Gryphon.

Lily McComb’s “Starting to Play” workshop includes the FREE use of a Loaner Guitar for the duration of the workshop. Sterling Park claims that the city’s affordable-housing policy itself. Sterling Park claims that the city’s policies (including payment of alleged BMR in-lieu fees) was arbitrary and capricious, not supported by substantial evidence and excessive, the lawsuit states.

The Sterling Park project, located on West Bayshore Road in Midtown, was approved in 2006. As a condition of approval, Sterling Park agreed to include 10 BMR units in the development as well as pay in-lieu fees to avoid having to build additional BMR units. The developer has been reluctantly paying these fees since June 2009 in order to obtain building permits for the new houses.

City officials have disputed Sterling Park’s claim that the city’s BMR program fully complies with state law. The demurrer, filed by attorney Scott Pinsky on behalf of the city, also notes the developer submitted his claim against the city after the three-year limitation period has expired. The initial contract between the city and the developer was signed in June 2006, according to the settlement agreement.

The BMR program, which has been producing about 7.5 BMR units a year, is needed to address the city’s severe shortage of affordable housing, Pinsky wrote. A recent study by consultant Keyser Marston Associates found that an even greater effort is needed to meet the needs for affordable housing in the city.

Assistant City Attorney Don Larkin said the city’s recent settlement with SummerHill in no way acknowledges any flaws in the city’s BMR policy, The agreement was to avoid costly litigation and get a good deal for the city, Larkin said. In-lieu fees will go to the city’s Housing Fund and will be used to support two affordable-housing projects: an Eden Housing development at 801 Alma St. and the Treehouse development at 488 West Charleston Road.

Larkin also disputed Sterling Park’s claim that the city’s BMR program is flawed.

“Do not accept that our ordinance is invalid and we have no plans to end or significantly revamp the BMR program,” Larkin said.

“A Palo Alto policy that requires developers to dedicate portions of their residential projects to affordable housing is facing a legal challenge from a developer who is calling the policy excessive, onerous and arbitrary.

Sterling Park is the second developer to protest the city’s policy for below-market-rate (BMR) housing in recent months.

On Dec. 14, the Palo Alto City Council voted 7-1 (with Mayor Peter Drekmeier dissenting and Coun cilman Yiaway Yeh absent), to approve a settlement with SummerHill Homes, builder of a 45-home complex on the former Elks Lodge site on El Camino Real. SummerHill argued that the city’s affordable-housing requirement “would severely undercut” its ability to complete the project.

The settlement allows SummerHill to pay the city about $4.4 million in in-lieu fees instead of constructing the required seven units of below-market-rate housing.

But while SummerHill’s challenge focused on the economic viability of its particular project, Sterling Park’s lawsuit targets the affordable-housing policy itself. Sterling Park claims that the city’s policies — which requires developers to set aside between 15 and 20 percent of the housing units for below-market-rate units — essentially amounts to a “special tax” against homebuilders.

Sterling Park claims Palo Alto has failed to demonstrate a connection between the new project and the shortage of affordable housing in the city. The suit also claims that the city’s policy “unlawfully required the project to bear costs and burdens necessary for the city to cure its existing perceived deficiencies of ‘affordable housing’ in the community.”

Palo Alto Little League

2010 Registration

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Palo Alto Little League has baseball leagues for children from 5-16 years old. It’s easy to register:

Online Registration

Register online and pay your fee online or by check.

Walk-in Registration

Register in person on the dates below at the clubhouse (3672 Middlefield Road – near E. Meadow):

Wed., January 6th (7-9 pm.)
Sat., January 9th (11 am. – 2 pm.)
Sun., January 10th (noon – 3 pm.)

A late fee applies after January 15th.

For more information and online registration, visit:

www.pabaseball.org
registration@pabaseball.org
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Lytton Plaza
(continued from page 3)

ing for the City Council to initiate the process.
Both Borock and conservationist Emily Renzel said the item should have never been on the commission’s agenda and that members’ discussion of the topic also violated city rules.
“Thats one of the problems of failing to follow the correct process is that there’s a temptation to say that — since a mistake was made and this has come before the commission and before the Historical Association — the City Council should also violate the process and staff should continue to violate the process by bringing the record of this meeting to the council,” Borock said.

It was the second time in recent months that Borock prevented downtown leaders and Palo Alto officials from making changes to Lytton Plaza in violation of city rules. In August, Borock forced the city to delay its scheduled ground-breaking for the new plaza because the city failed to grant residents a 30-day waiting period to appeal the park-improvement project. The city council had to call a special meeting to ensure the renovation could start on time and be completed before the end of the holiday season.

The renovated Lytton Plaza — featuring new landscaping, new street furniture, fresh paving and a fountain — was officially unveiled on Dec. 18.

On Dec. 15, Keenan, Gross and Levy catalogued the many local accomplishments of the Thoits family. Keenan said the Thoits family is virtually synonymous with the economic prosperity of downtown Palo Alto.

“When I think about commerce in Palo Alto and I think about downtown and civic engagement, the Thoits family jumps off the page for the city and the downtown in particular,” said Keenan, who filed the formal request to rename the plaza.

Duncan Matteson, who co-founded Mid-Peninsula Bank with Warren Thoits, called his former business partner Palo Alto’s “finest gentleman.” Levy noted that by renaming Lytton Plaza the city would not only honor a great family but also help stave off confusion from visitors (Lytton Plaza, both he and Keenan pointed out, is not on Lytton Avenue). Dykwel called the family members “pioneers.”

The rest of the commission was generally sympathetic to the proposal, but members decided to hold off on making any recommendations until directed by the council.

Both Borock and Renzel asked the commission to carefully consider whether or not to change the plaza’s name. Under the city’s criteria, the person for whom a place is renamed must have made a significant contribution to the “protection of natural or cultural resources” in Palo Alto; substantial contributions to “the betterment of a specific facility or park,” or substantial contributions to “recreational opportunities” in Palo Alto.

Renzel argued that the Thoits family, for all its contributions, doesn’t meet these criteria. Borock said that Bart Lytton — a banker who opened Lytton Savings and Loan and who built the plaza — may still have a stronger claim to the plaza’s name.

“Bart Lytton had a vision to have public spaces like this one in a downtown area,” Borock said. “Were also celebrating the fact that all historic events are associated with Lytton Plaza.”

Espinosa, the council’s liaison to the commission, said he expects the council to initiate the renaming process in the coming weeks.

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be e-mailed at gsheyner@paweekly.com.

Public Agenda

PALO ALTO CITY COUNCIL ... The council plans to swear in City Council members Karen Holman, Larry Klein, Gail Price, Gregory Scharff and Nancy Shepherd. The council also plans to elect a new mayor and vice mayor and to read resolutions commending outgoing council members Peter Drekmeyer, Jack Morton, Yoriko Kishimoto and John Barton. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 4, in the Council Chambers at City Hall (250 Hamilton Ave.).

UTILITY ADVISORY COMMISSION ... The commission plans to discuss a City Council colleagues’ memo about reducing potable-water use in Palo Alto by 20 percent by 2020. The commission is also scheduled to hear a report on converting electric lines from overhead to underground. The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 6, in the Council Chambers at City Hall (250 Hamilton Ave.).

PALO ALTO ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD ... The board plans to discuss proposed streetscape improvements at the intersection of El Camino Real and Stanford Avenue. The improvements include bulb-outs, enhanced pedestrian crosswalks and street furniture. The board also plans to discuss 340 University Ave., a request by Bohlin Cywinski for a minor architectural review of exterior building improvements, including a new façade and roof. The meeting will be held at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, Jan. 7, in the Council Chambers at City Hall (250 Hamilton Ave.).
Woodside attorney named Superior Court judge

Woodside resident and trial attorney Theodore C. Zayner has been appointed as a judge on the Superior Court of Santa Clara County. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced Wednesday. (Posted Dec. 29 at 9:26 p.m.)

Palo Alto offers holiday-lights trade

Palo Alto utilities customers can trade in their old holiday lights for a free string of new, energy-efficient LED bulbs. While supplies last, the City of Palo Alto Utilities Department will hand out a new LED string in exchange for an old string of working incandescent lights. (Posted Dec. 29 at 11:37 a.m.)

County debuts drug-discount program

All residents of Santa Clara County can now use a new, free prescription-drug discount card, which allows them to save an average of 22 percent on drugs purchased at participating pharmacies. Residency is the only eligibility requirement, Santa Clara County Supervisor Liz Kniss said in a press release. (Posted Dec. 29 at 9:50 a.m.)

47 Bay Area residents fail to Spare the Air

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District recorded 47 potential violations of the regional no-burn restriction on Christmas Day, air district spokesman Ralph Brimmer said this week. A citation, if issued, carries a $400 fine paid to the air district. (Posted Dec. 29 at 9:07 a.m.)

Man could get life in attempted homicide

Mountain View resident Reginald Ellis was arrested late last week for allegedly trying to choke his girlfriend to death in November, and authorities now say he faces a life sentence if found guilty on several counts including attempted murder. (Posted Dec. 29 at 8:22 a.m.)

Caltrain offering free rides New Year's Eve

Caltrain is offering free rides to passengers after 11 p.m. on New Year's Eve to encourage revelers not to drive, according to agency officials. (Posted Dec. 28 at 9:03 a.m.)

Drunk-driving arrests up in Bay Area

The California Highway Patrol has arrested 160 impaired drivers in the Bay Area since Thursday evening. (Posted Dec. 28 at 9 a.m.)

Train fatality is 26-year-old Mountain View man

The man killed late Wednesday afternoon by a southbound Caltrain express train and we're on a bicycle trying to catch up.

“Seems to me they’re on an express train and we’re on a bicycle trying to catch up.” — Palo Alto Vice Mayor Jack Morton speaking in February on Palo Alto’s efforts to address its concerns with the California High-Speed Rail Authority.

“It’s sort of like a mosquito on an elephant.” — John Barton, Palo Alto City Council member, arguing in March that the city’s new ban on plastic checkout bags is too limited because it affects only four supermarkets.

“That’s like the Fire Department is giving the city the finger.” — Vice Mayor Jack Morton criticizing in April the minimal budget cuts volunteered by the Palo Alto Fire Department despite the city’s fiscal crisis.

“This is a real black eye for the city process.” — Bern Beecham, former Palo Alto mayor, on Stanford’s announcement in April it would indefinitely shelve plans to expand the Stanford Shopping Center. The city had hoped to gain additional tax revenues from the center.

“It’s a really, really dumb idea.” — City Councilman John Burton on a May proposal to ease California’s $21.3 billion budget gap by borrowing money from cities and counties. State lawmakers in July approved a compromise, diverting $2 billion in local funds to the state.

“Hopefully ... we can put this difficult episode behind us.” — City Manager James Keene of Palo Alto on a May police auditor’s report that detailed flaws in the police investigation into the Children’s Theatre.

“I’m going to the East Coast for college because I feel like once Palo Alto sucks you in you end up living here for 20 years.” — Grace LaPier, a June Palo Alto High School graduate, on her thoughts about the future.
“Hug your kids. Tell them you love them. ... And celebrate any passing grade.”
— Philippe Rey, executive director of the nonprofit Adolescent Counseling Services, in October following the fourth death of a Palo Alto teen on the train tracks.

“It’s not just a horse of a different color; it’s a zebra.”
— Judith Wasserman, a member of Palo Alto’s Architectural Review Board, speaking of proposed designs for Lucille Packard Children’s Hospital in August. The city is still negotiating with Stanford University and is working the Environmental Impact Report on the $1.5 billion rebuilding of the medical center and hospitals.

“We’re at a dangerous point right now.”
— Supervisor Kevin Skelly of the Palo Alto Unified School District in August — after the third suicide involving a school child in 2009 — on comforting grieving students while not making suicide seem normal.

“We’re dealing with a crisis ... and there’s no audience.”
— Vice Mayor Jack Morton regarding a sparsely attended City Council meeting in October, at which the city’s fiscal crisis was discussed. Since then, the city covered an additional $4.8 million hole in the previous year’s budget.

“We’re not a community that beats down doors to collect $75.”
— Palo Alto Mayor Peter Drekmeier regarding fears in October that a business-license tax would prompt audits of home-based businesses. The tax proposal, Measure A, was defeated by nearly 57 percent of city voters in November.

“We’ve only had one dog so far, and no babies.”
— Robert Archibald, an election inspector, regarding the sparse walk-in voting for the other election, where mail-in ballots were heavily used.

“The only other thing we can do in this city is eat.”
— Donna Berrylott, objecting to a plan in November to replace Palo Alto Bowl with a hotel and townhouses. The City Council approved the plan in December, which will replace the bowling alley and the Thai Garden restaurant with a 167-room hotel and 26 townhouses.

“While a number of serious mistakes were made, they were made with good intentions.”
— Palo Alto Public Works Director Glenn Roberts in December on clearingcutting California Avenue trees in mid-September. Seventy-five new trees will be planted this winter along the three-block stretch of the California Avenue business district.

News Digest

Palo Alto council to choose new mayor
Palo Alto will swear in newly elected members Karen Holman, Larry Klein, Gail Price, Gregory Scharff and Nancy Shepherd as well as elect a new mayor and vice mayor at its first meeting of the new year Monday, Jan. 4.

The council will also read commendations for outgoing council members Peter Drekmeier, Jack Morton, Yoriko Kishimoto and John Baroni.

The meeting will be held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 250 Hamilton Ave., Palo Alto, beginning at 7 p.m. ■ — Palo Alto Weekly staff

County debuts drug-discount program
All residents of Santa Clara County can now use a new, free prescription-drug discount card, which allows them to save an average of 22 percent on drugs purchased at participating pharmacies.

Residency is the only eligibility requirement, Santa Clara County Supervisor Liz Kniss said in a press release.

Most local pharmacies are participants, including Costco, CVS Caremark, Rite Aid, Target and Walgreens. For a complete list, as well as a price estimate for an individual prescription, drug-interaction information and news articles about health issues, visit www.caremark.com.

The free cards are available at county libraries and social-service agencies, as well as at participating pharmacies and online. Copies can also be downloaded at www.sccgov.org and printed out.

Residents can also call 877-321-2652.

The plan is not limited to people who are uninsured or underinsured; any resident can use the card to save money on prescription drugs not covered by their health plan. Anyone in the household may use the card.

The discount drug program is funded by drug distributors and pharmacies and will incur no costs for Santa Clara County, Kniss said Tuesday, noting that drug companies and pharmacies want to sell their products.

“The reason we are pushing it so hard is that for anyone who is uninsured or who falls into the ‘donut hole,’ this provides that discount,” she said. “The purpose is to assure that the uninsured get covered.”

The discount-card program is open-ended and not part of a pilot or experiment, Kniss added. It is offered by Santa Clara County and the National Association of Counties.

San Mateo County launched a similar program in December, offering greater discounts than the Caremark/NACo card with its Coast2Coast Rx Card, according to Martin Dettelbach, chief marketing officer for Financial Marketing Concepts Inc. of Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., which markets discount benefit programs.

The card also offers discounts on lab and imaging tests, he said.

The discount card can be printed from the website, www.coast2coastrx.com/sanmateo.c. ■ — Carol Blitzer

Warrant issued in philanthropy embezzlement
An arrest warrant was issued Dec. 24 for a former Silicon Valley Community Foundation employee suspected of stealing $100,000 from the organization, according to the Mountain View Police Department.

Police spokesperson Steve McCoy said he could not give out any more information until the former employee, Frances Louise Stewart, 52, was arrested.

On Monday the foundation announced that it had fired an employee on suspicion of embezzlement.

“Our finance department noticed a discrepancy and they began trying to figure out what was going on,” said Rebecca Salmer, vice president of finance and communications for the nonprofit, located in Mountain View on El Camino Real near Showers Drive.

An internal investigation was launched and less than a week later the case was turned over to the Mountain View Police Department. Stewart worked in the foundation’s human-resources department, Salmer said.

“The theft was identified by our finance department as a result of internal controls, and we intend to pursue every possible remedy to ensure that restitution is made to the community foundation,” CEO and President Emmett D. Carson said in an e-mail.

“The incident remains under investigation by external authorities, and the community foundation is engaging a forensic accountant to provide further assistance as needed,” a statement on the organization’s website read.

The money taken was from “flexible spending accounts” used for employee health care and dependent care expenses. The monies were not budgeted for philanthropic grants or programs.

Any money not recovered will be covered by insurance, the statement said.

The Community Foundation oversees donations to numerous local nonprofit organizations and in 2008 awarded $264 million in grants. ■ — Kelsey Mesher
Budget 2010
(continued from page 3)

On Jan. 11 — just three months after the council unilaterally imposed new conditions on SEIU employees — negotiations between the two sides are set to resume.

Councilman Pat Burt said the council also plans to re-evaluate the entire government structure in the coming year. “We’re going to look at the whole city government and ask if there are any ways in which we can run more efficiently,” Burt said.

Other cuts will stretch far beyond City Hall and could prove more painful for the average resident. The city is facing a $5.4 million gap in the 2010 fiscal year, which ends on June 30. So far, city officials have transferred money from reserve funds, withdrew funds from the Public Safety Building project and made other one-time, under-the-radar adjustments to close the gap.

But City Manager James Keene said closing future gaps would almost certainly involve elimination of some programs and services. “We’re really at the end of the line as far as stuffing things around and making cuts that don’t require a serious prioritization of our programs,” Keene said. This is not a year where there’s going to be opportunities to say, ‘Yes, to a people a lot.”

The council’s Finance Committee has already identified several programs that may be on the chopping block if the budget picture worsens. These include the Fire Department’s emergency-preparation program, the Police Department’s community-outreach services and the city’s shuttle service. The list may change or expand in 2010, when new council members Karen Holman, Gail Price, Nancy Shepherd and Greg Scharff bring their own views and priorities to the dais.

If there is a positive aspect of the economic downturn, it’s lower construction costs. Drekmeier said. With Palo Alto preparing to rebuild its libraries, expand the Art Center and upgrade the streetscape along California Avenue, city officials have been heartened by the lower bids they’ve been receiving for the various capital projects.

“Capital projects can now be done much cheaper,” Drekmeier said. “We’re seeing a lot of bids 30 percent lower than expected, so this could be a good time to move forward with those projects.”

Keene said the city’s Administrative Services Department is now considering other infrastructure and maintenance projects to take advantage of the lower construction costs.

While the Public Works Department coordinates the city’s multitude of infrastructural projects in 2010, city planners and the City Council will be spending large chunks of the year debating the city’s long-term future. Palo Alto’s upgrade of its Comprehensive Plan — the city’s land-use bible — is scheduled to accelerate in February when the council and the Planning and Transportation Commission meet to discuss the $850,000 revision effort.

Burt, a former planning commissioner, said the upgrade is critical because it will dictate the city’s approach toward building new housing and protecting residents’ quality of life. Keene said the revision process would help city officials make long-term choices about the future of Palo Alto.

The council also plans to spend much of the coming year struggling with another big-ticket land-use issue: Stanford University Medical Center’s $3.5 billion expansion of its hospital facilities, which would bring 3.5 million square feet of new development to the city. The city’s long-awaited environmental review for the project is scheduled to be released this month.

That’s also when negotiations between Stanford and Palo Alto over the long-promised transit agreement are expected to heat up, since the project far exceeds what the city’s zoning code allows.

“Building is a project of such a scale that it’s transformational,” Kishimoto said at a Dec. 7 discussion on the Stanford expansions. “The challenge is, how do you make it into a project that’s transformational in a positive way, rather than a negative way?”

So far, the two sides remain at odds over the “public benefits” Stanford should be required to provide to get the city’s permission for the project. Keene predicted at the Dec. 7 meeting that the release of the environmental study in March should settle the two sides resolve these issues.

“It’s safe to say, we mutually recognize that moving the discussion through an eventual resolution can’t effectively take place until the Draft Environmental Impact Report is out,” Keene said.

The new year will also force city officials to grapple with an assortment of hold-over issues from 2009. California’s proposed high-speed-rail system, which would pass through Palo Alto, will continue to dominate public hearings in Palo Alto throughout 2010. The city’s debate over the future of composting is scheduled to resume in February, when the City Council considers whether it’s feasible to build a new waste-to-energy facility. Residents around El Camino Avenue will have a chance to express their views about the city’s streetscape improvements in the summer. When the city plans to replace street furniture and change the lane alignments on the busy street.

The word “green” will also likely continue to dominate the council lexicon. Burt said he’d like to see the city put together a “master plan” for the city’s body of environmental initiatives — a document that could both coordinate the city’s environmental policies and showcase the city to outsiders as a leader in the field.

The city’s leadership on green issues has already attracted great attention from other cities, states and nations, Burt said, and was the main reason the U.S.-China Green Energy Council chose Palo Alto as the host city for its annual forum in October 2009. Stanford University and businesses such as Tesla Motors (which announced its move to Palo Alto in April) and Better Place further reinforced this image, he said.

The city’s environmental leadership, he said, may be the key to attracting new businesses to Palo Alto and promoting economic growth in a year filled with financial anxieties. “We don’t have to start any new programs, but we need to continue our momentum in this arena and tie it with economic benefits in our community,” Burt said.

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be e-mailed at gsheyner@pawekly.com.

Upfront
Frank Greene, Silicon Valley technology pioneer, dies
Chip designer, CEO and activist indutced into Silicon Valley Engineering Hall of Fame
Frank S. Greene, a pioneering Silicon Valley technologist, died unexpectedly Saturday at El Camino Hospital. He was 71.
Greene stood among technology giants Robert Noyce, David Packard, William Hewlett and the Varian brothers as one of 63 inductees into the Silicon Valley Engineering Hall of Fame, conferred by the Silicon Valley Engineering Council.
Greene was honored as one of the first black technologists, breaking the color barrier in local industry.

Deaths
Troy Parker
Troy Gene Parker, 69, a resident of Palo Alto, died Dec. 23.
He was born in Laredo, Texas, raised in Heaven, Ok., and moved to California with his cousin as a teenager.

Answers to this week’s puzzles, which can be found on page 25

Transitions
Births, marriages and deaths

Frank Greene, Silicon Valley technology pioneer, dies
Chip designer, CEO and activist inducted into Silicon Valley Engineering Hall of Fame

Frank S. Greene

Deaths
Troy Parker
Troy Gene Parker, 69, a resident of Palo Alto, died Dec. 23.

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Fresh news delivered daily
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Express
Today’s news, sports & hot picks

William E. Zisko
December 13, 1952 - December 18, 2009
Bill practiced law in Palo Alto for 29 years and was a founding partner of Tomlinson, Zisko, Morosoli and Maser LLP. He was a sports enthusiast and a loyal fan of the Los Angeles Lakers. He was an avid fan of collegiate sports and attended several final four basketball tournaments with his daughters.

Bill enjoyed traveling abroad with his family, as well as attending outdoor musical concerts.

He was known by many, and will be greatly missed by all.

A celebration of his life will be held at La Bodeguita Del In, 11am at Pilgrim Baptist Church, 217 N. Grant St, San Mateo. Arrangements by Crosby-N Gray & Co., Burlingame, CA 650-342-6617.

Freddie L. Pierce
Resident of San Mateo, CA
Special son, brother and friend, Freddie Pierce has gone to be with his heavenly Father. Freddie was blessed with 20 years of life. Quiet hour was held Tuesday, Dec. 22nd from 6pm-8pm at Crosby- N Gray & Co., 2 Park Road, Burlingame. Service was held on Wednesday, Dec 23rd @ 11am at Pilgrim Baptist Church, 217 N. Grant St, San Mateo. Interment was at Skyline Memorial Park, San Mateo.

Jeanne Aufmuth’s top films

10. The Cove
Intrepid activists set out for Japan to rescue dolphins being slaughtered for “pest control.”Louie Psihoyos’ harrowing exposé of courage and might is a heroic and unforgettable (and terribly gruesome) tribute to those trying to make the world a better place by preserving all of God’s creatures.

9. The Hangover
Snaps to the movie that made me laugh longest and loudest in 2009. But Todd Phillips’ whacked-out buddy pic is more than genre formula; its unique narrative structure and “Where’s Waldo?” intrigue make for compelling movie-going. And Bradley Cooper in that sexy black suit — can I hear a hallelujah?

8. This Is It
I was haunted by Kenny Ortega’s behind-the-scenes homage to the departed King of Pop. The sheer force of Michael Jackson’s gargantuan talent combined with his laser-focused physical effort left me frozen with joy and grief. An essential tribute to the world’s all-time greatest act.

7. An Education
Carey Mulligan’s blistering performance as a brilliant and bored Eng... (continued on next page)
Jeanne Aufmuth

lish high-schooler who falls for an older man is fiercely pitch-perfect. Peter Sarsgaard churns up the scenery with his silkyvier. Betrayal never looked so good.

6. Punyo Hayao Miyazaki’s crude take on the Little Mermaid legend is a magnificent master class in surreal Japanese anime featuring a clever and calculating goldfish as its perky protagonist. A strikingly poignant study of skill and will.

5. A Single Man Colin Firth gives the performance of a lifetime as a gay English professor suffering the jagged slings and arrows of grief. Designer Tom Ford’s gauzy visuals and stream-of-consciousness approach lend stylistic beauty to the subtle notion of veiled passion and existential desperation.

4. Away We Go Sam Mendes’ little movie—that could put tight focus on dark humor tinted with the desperation and anxiety of laying down roots, drawing on rich reserves of drama and family history to shape a dogged desire for a happy home. All packaged with a fresh indie feel more Coen brothers than classic Mendes.

3. Coraline Henry Selick snatches a timeless disenfranchised youth theme and turns it on its ear with psychotic angst and spooky dark corners. Moody, brilliant and eminently frightening, this one will leave its mark on me.

2. (500) Days of Summer Not your mother’s rom-com comedy! Newbie helmer Mark Webb takes square aim at the ups and inevitable downs of Gen-Y relationships featuring Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Zooey Deschanel as young lovers on different quixotic planes — or is it planets?

1. The Hurt Locker Jeremy Renner turns up the heat and puts the S in swagger as a hyper-intense military bomb specialist who can’t let go of the job. Director Kathryn Bigelow (woman does war!) gets to the heart of the matter with sensitivity, brutality and an unnerving sense of futility and despair. Say hello to Oscar!

Jeanne Aufmuth’s pans

Nine Rob Marshall lays a big Christmas goose-egg with this frazzled and frenetic adaptation of the 1982 stage play that features a petulant philanderer, his curiously cloying harem, tired scripting and a petulant philanderer, his curiously Christmas goose-egg with this melodrama is desperately seeking of unrequited love, but Joaquin Phoenix’s disingenuous oddities and Gwyneth Paltrow’s overcooked pre- tension did me in.

Where the Wild Things Are Granted, it’s a challenge turning a 48-page classic into two hours of silver-screen magic. But Spike Jonze’s take on Maurice Sendak’s timely standard is maddening, self-serving and downright dull.

Peter Canavese
dy. First-time director Tom Ford overdoses on style, but “A Single Man” is also a thinking person’s picture about love, loss and the mortal ravages of time.

9. Where the Wild Things Are How do you make a 95-minute film out of a 10-sentence children’s book? Very carefully. At least that’s what we can gather from Spike Jonze’s well-considered, well-designed, well-performed youth psychodrama. Taking its cues from Maurice Sendak’s book, the screenplay by Jonze and novelist Dave Eggers projects childhood emotions onto a not-terribly inviting landscape and its monstrous denizens. For the inner child in all of us.

8. Up Pixar, on the other hand, tapped into our inner senior citizen for its annual gift to the masses. Few images were as indelible this year as the four-minute montage that economically dramatizes the 60-year relationship between Carl and Ellie, or the keen symbol of an elderly, grief-clouded Carl dragging the baggage of their lives — a home lifted by thousands of balloons — toward the destination of their dreams.

7. The Hurt Locker The top suspense picture of the year turned out to be this well-wrought Iraq War drama from Kathryn Bigelow. In Mark Boal’s script and Jeremy Renner’s leading performance, we got more than an armrest-gripping workout. We also got a pithy representation of the modern grunt: sadly disposable, highly skilled, soul-bruised, and with each tick of a bomb timer, just a bit more addicted to the drug of war.

6. The Road Screenwriter Joaquin Phoenix José Padilha and director John Hillcoat dared scale the lofty terrain of Cormac McCarthy’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, and the resulting film packs a gut punch. Astonishing performances (particularly those of Viggo Mortensen and Kodi Smit-McPhee as father and son) tow the morality play about humanity’s emotional and behavioral limits.

5. In the Loop One part “Dr. Strangeflower” and two parts “The Office.” “In the Loop” was the year’s top comedy, a political satire savaging government movers and shakers on both sides of the Atlantic. This loose spoof of the BBC comedy series “The Thick of It” is the brainchild of director Armando Iannucci and his team of co-writers, though it also benefits from improvisational flexibility.

4. Tokyo Sonata Though “Up in the Air” is hoarding all the awards-season attention with its disingenuous concern for the downsized, Kiyoji Kurosawa’s domestic drama puts it to shame. Kurosawa explores a family under strain as a ashamed father attempts to hide his joblessness: Disturbed by the duplicity he sees, the man’s wife and children lose their moorings and begin to act out.

3. Still Walking Taking an un- derstated tack, Hirokazu Kore-eda delivered another affecting domestic drama from Japan, this one taking place over a period of one day in the life of a family. When grown children grudgingly visit their parents, generational conflict arises as young and old sift through past and present only to find that their individual hopes and family ties have mostly escaped them.

2. Coraline Local hero Henry Selick helmed this stop-motion animated adventure distinguished by its serious girl-power and otherworldly circus vaudeville. Based on the Neil Gaiman book, “Coraline” offers up a wild and woolly wonderland while also telling a tight tale that looks like Hallow- een but endorses thanks-giving. It’s like “Paust,” if it were a comedy ... for kids ... in 3-D.

1. Sita Sings the Blues Notice a theme here? 2009 was a banner year for animated films, and the most creative was this little charmer written, directed, produced and animated by Nina Paley. The director (it’s legally available for free online, but don’t be a cheapskate; make a donation or buy the DVD).

Paul Blart: Mall Cop Who wants their kids to grow up to be idiots? Have I got the movie for you! (Parental guidance suggested.)

Hannah Montana: The Movie A crassly commercial enterprise that’s supposedly about embracing authenticity: confused and confusing (but candy-colored ... yay!).

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen Everything’s that was wrong with the movie industry today in an efficient ... 150 minutes?! Wake me when it’s over.

**WRINKLES?**

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Where the Wild Things Are": hit or miss?
Susan Tavernetti
(continued from page 12)

to inform others that they no longer have one. Up in the air at best and in free fall at worst, ungrounded characters define the postmodern scene. Never has a movie about detachment and failed relationships been so enjoyable to watch.

8. The Maid (La Nana) Catalina Saavedra burns up the screen in her riveting portrayal of a middle-aged housekeeper who has cooked and cleaned half her life away for an affluent Chilean family. With anger bubbling beneath the surface, she’s a woman on the verge — of who knows what. Writer-director Sebastián Silva conjures up a drama boasting one of the most fearless performances of the year.

7. The White Ribbon Michael Haneke invites reflection. With the painterly look and understated eloquence of a Bresson classic, this year’s Cannes Palme d’Or winner focuses on the puzzling acts of violence in a northern German village before World War I. As in “The Time of the Wolf” and “Funny Games,” Haneke examines the dark side of society. The menacing political parable allows you to ponder issues of patriarchy, class, religious beliefs and collective cruelty. Only the film stock is black and white.

6. The Beaches of Agniesz (Les Plages d’Agnès) — To love cinema is to love Jacques Demy, painting, family and puzzles — and Agniesz Varda’s autobiographical documentaty. The octogenarian French New Wave filmmaker walks through the sands of time, free-associating and re-imagining her past in the most inventive ways. A spirited and curious sprite, she pieces together shards of memory from Belgium to Cuba, from Jean-Luc Godard to Harrison Ford. Her elan for the cinema and life, underscored by the sadness of loss, makes for an affecting, mature masterpiece.

5. Fantastic Mr. Fox Imaginative, quirky and brimming with visual wonder, Wes Anderson’s tale about a fox that loses his tail — but gains the love and respect of wild things — epitomizes Fantastice. The stop-motion adventure of furry creatures outwitting corporate farm-
CINEMATIC SAINTS AND SINNERS
The 10 most memorable heroes and villains of 2009
by Tyler Hanley

The year in film offered moviegoers an array of characters to cheer for and cringe at. This year’s list of notable heroes and villains includes a sadistic mutant, a selfless boy scout, a devoted father and a distorted mother. And Charles Dickens’ iconic character Ebenezer Scrooge earns both accolades and ridicule.

Heroes

Bryan Mills (Liam Neeson), “Taken”
Irish-born actor Liam Neeson brought physicality and confidence to one of the year’s best action films. The no-nonsense father wouldn’t let distance or armed adversaries deter him from rescuing his abducted daughter.

Ebenezer Scrooge (voice of Jim Carrey)
“Disney’s A Christmas Carol” A specter-induced epiphany on Christmas Eve turned this miser into a do-gooder. Carrey’s unique flair helped bring heart and humor to Dickens’ classic protagonist.

Nelson Mandela (Morgan Freeman), “Invictus”
The Nobel Prize-winning president used rugby to help unite a fractured South Africa. Freeman’s Mandela exemplified the word “hero” by living and teaching self-sacrifice, perseverance and compassion.

Russell (voice of Jordan Nagai), “Up”
Cinema’s favorite junior wilderness explorer was all courage, conviction, sacrifice, perseverance and compassion.

Sherlock Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.), “Sherlock Holmes”
Downey Jr. infused one of literature’s most notable heroes with charm and bare-knuckle tenacity. Holmes used his unparalleled observation and deduction skills to foil a sinister plot that would have dangerously altered civilization.

Villains

Col. Hans Landa (Christoph Waltz), “Inglourious Basterds”
Soon-to-be Oscar nominee Waltz brought a creepy calm demeanor to his heartless Nazi. The grinning deviant proudly backed a reputation that included abuse, intimidation and murder.

Ebenezer Scrooge (voice of Jim Carrey)
“Disney’s A Christmas Carol” An overdue transformation doesn’t give Ebenezer a pass for years of spite. This sour curmudgeon grumbled and cursed during times of joy and hoarded riches when generosity was needed most.

John Dillinger (Johnny Depp), “Public Enemies”
The gun-toting bank robber had the hypnotic allure of a Hollywood celebrity. As portrayed by the always-entertaining Johnny Depp, Dillinger used his charisma to parlay a life of violence and thievery.

Other Mother (voice of Teri Hatcher), “Coraline”
The at-first tender, button-eyed mother eventually shed her synthetic skin to reveal a nightmarish inner self. A slender, distorted frame and fingers capped with jagged blades made it clear this was no mommy dearest.

Sabretooth (Liev Schreiber), “X-Men Origins: Wolverine” Schreiber clawed and snarled his way into the skin of Marvel Comics’ vicious mutant with aplomb. Schreiber’s Sabretooth displayed a sadistic bloodlust that tore innocent lives and lifelong loyalties asunder.

Outside the cinema, Weekly arts editor Rebecca Wallace spent much of her year in art galleries, theaters, museums and concert halls. Her Top Ten list features her favorite arts events from the past 12 months in the Palo Alto area. To read her list, check out her blog, Ad Libs, at blog.paloaltoonline.com/adlibs/.

Musician Saul Kaye brings his brand of “Jewish blues” to Palo Alto with a Jan. 7 concert at the Oshman Family Jewish Community Center. To read a profile of Kaye, go to www.PaloAltoOn-line.com.

Pizzeria Venti

Holiday Menu

CHEF’S SPECIALTIES
OSOSOUCO a classic dish from Milan, features Braised Veal shanks in a White Wine and Tomato sauce over Risotto.
GRILLED MAHI MAHI over Jalapeno Mashed Potato and sautéed Spinach topped with tropical Salsa.
GRILLED SALMON over Garlic Mashed Potato and Sautéed Mixed Greens.
GREEN AND APPLES Crisp Garden Lettuce topped with Bleu Cheese, Walnuts, Cranberries, Granny Smith Apples and a sweet Vidalia Onion Dressing.

PASTAS
FETTUCCINI CARBONARA Pancetta, mushrooms, green peas, and tomatoes in alfredo sauce.
LINGUINI LEOVARDIO Chicken Breast, Fresh Spinach in a Caper Sauce.
PENNE FRANCESCA Shrimp and Fresh Asparagus Tips in a Garlic Lemon Butter Sauce made with Fresh Sliced Mushrooms. Served over a bed of Penne Pasta.
SEAFOOD RAVIOLI Served with Roma Tomatoes, Asparagus and Lobster Cream Sauce.

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Susan Tavernetti’s pans
This year, just one film stood out for Tavernetti as particularly awful.

Nine Add these up: A narcissistic film director (Daniel Day-Lewis) with writer’s block; a parade of scantily dressed female stars (Penélope Cruz, Nicole Kidman, Kate Hudson, Fergie); a nonsensical narrative; show-stopping (in the worst way) musical numbers; and a mountain of hype courtesy of the Weinstein Company. The sum equals Rob Marshall’s disastrous, disappointing “Nine” — a jazz-hands insult to Federico Fellini’s narrative and stylistic 1963 groundbreaker. “8 1/2.” Marshall should have stuck to “Chicago” instead of venturing to Rome.
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Movies

MOVIE TIMES

A Single Man (R) ****
Aquarius Theatre: 9:00 p.m.

Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel (G) (Not Reviewed)
Century 16: Fri.-Sun. at 1:25, 4:20, 6:20, 7:30, 9:45 & 11:00 p.m.

An Education (PG) ****
Century 16: Wed.-Sun. at 10:45 a.m.; 12:00, 1:45, 3:30, 5:00, 6:45, 8:30, 11:30 a.m.

Avatar (PG-13) ***
Century 16: 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30, 11:00 a.m.

The Blind Side (PG-13) **
Century 16: Fri.-Sun. at 10:45, 1:20, 3:50, 6:20, 8:50, 11:20 p.m.

Broken Embraces (R)
Century 20: 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 8:30, 9:30, 10:30 p.m.

Did You Hear About the Morgans? (PG-13) (Not Reviewed)
Century 20: 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 8:30, 9:30, 10:30 p.m.

Disney’s A Christmas Carol (PG) ****
Century 20: 1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 8:30, 11:00 a.m.

Invictus (PG-13) ***
Century 16: Wed.-Sun. at 10:05 & 1:05 a.m.; 12:30, 4:30, 7:00, 9:00, 11:05 a.m.

It’s Complicated (R) ****
Century 16: Wed.-Sun. at 10:05 & 1:05 a.m.; 12:30, 4:30, 7:00, 9:00, 11:05 a.m.

The Metropolitan Opera: Les Contes d’Hoffmann (Not Rated) (Not Reviewed)
Century 20: 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00 a.m.

Nine (PG-13) *1/2
Century 20: 11:00 a.m.; 1:30, 2:45, 4:30, 6:00, 7:30, 9:00, 10:30 a.m.

Precious (R) ****
Aquarius Theatre: Sat. at midnight.

The Princess and the Frog
Century 20: Fri.-Sat. at 10:20 a.m., 1:20, 4:20, 7:20, 10:20 p.m.

The Rocky Horror Picture Show
Century 16: Fri.-Sat. at 10:30 p.m., 1:30, 4:30, 7:30, 10:30 p.m.

Sherlock Holmes (PG-13) ***
Century 20: 11:00 a.m.; 1:00, 2:45, 4:30, 6:00, 6:45, 8:30, 11:00 a.m.

The Twilight Saga: New Moon (PG-13) (Not Reviewed)
Century 20: Mon.-Sat. at 11:00 a.m., 1:30, 4:30, 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a.m.

Up in the Air (R) **1/2
Century 20: Wed.-Sun. at 10:00 a.m., 1:00, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:00, 10:00 a.m.

The Young Victoria (PG) ***
Century 16: Fri.-Sat. at 10:15, 1:15, 4:15, 7:15, 10:15, 1:15 p.m.

Theater Addresses

CINE ARTS
At Palo Alto Square
500 Bayshore Boulevard
Tel: 650-324-2600
Fax: 650-324-2601
E-mail: cinearts@comcast.net

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CINEMARK
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E-mail: cinearts@comcast.net

DidyouHearAboutTheMorgans.com

Internet address: For show times, plot synopses, theater addresses, trailers and more information about films playing, go to Palo Alto Online at http://www.PaloAltoOnline.com/
The end of 2009 not only brings us to the end of the decade, but most likely to the final athletic event for Stanford senior two-way standout Toby Gerhart in Thursday’s Sun Bowl. It has been an outstanding run for the versatile athlete.

by Rick Eymer

Let this year be forever known as ‘Year of the Toby.’ Stanford’s fabulous senior running back, Toby Gerhart, opened the year as the school’s single-season rushing recordholder. He ends the year with that and much more.

Gerhart spent part of the year playing baseball at Stanford, hitting .288 with seven home runs and 36 RBI, both third best on a team that finished 30-25 overall. He was 7-of-7 in stolen base attempts and made one error in 107 chances for a .991 fielding percentage.

The dude can play, and that got the creative minds on campus thinking and collaborating on what has turned out to be the advertising sensation of the decade.

Sometime between the baseball and football seasons, Senior Director of Media Relations Jim Young and Director of Creative Video Bud Anderson masterminded the creation of a series of “Toby Gerhart, Multi-Sport Athlete” promos that took on a life of their own as they were revealed over the summer and fall.

The videos were never designed to promote Gerhart’s Heisman Trophy candidacy, and yet they sparked a grass roots campaign that helped put a face to the Gerhart legacy.

Gerhart was filmed with members of the men’s tennis team, the men’s golf team, the field hockey team, the men’s swimming team and the synchronized swimming team — each becoming an instant classic. Visit Stanford Athletics’ official web site for more information.

Gerhart might not have needed the support of outside influences. His Cardinal football teammates came to the aid of the Toby in his time of need. They blocked, threw and ran the ball and produced the most-prolific offense in school history.

In college years, a generation lasts but four years and so when Gerhart was named the Heisman runnerup, it seemed like a lifetime ago that Jim Plankett accepted the school’s only Heisman Trophy.

It’s been a couple of generations since Stanford has been seen in a bowl game. That changes on the final day of the year: Toby’s year.

Let’s go back to the more innocent days of 2009, when Barack Obama was already making decisions as President of the United States and he hadn’t even taken the oath of office.

(Here’s hoping Menlo School and (continued on page 19)
Stanford grad Nate Wilcox-Fogel found his dream job in the Obama administration. He planned to head off to Washington D.C. after graduating last December.

January brought high expectations for both the men’s and women’s basketball programs. Rookie coach Johnny Dawkins had the men playing well and winning a lot. The Cardinal was 10-0 when Father Time turned over the keys to the new year. It turned into another 20-win season as one of the finest senior class programs in history brought its final bows.

Lawrence Hill, Mitch Johnson and Anthony Goods were recruited by Mike Montgomery, played for Trent Johnson and finished with Dawkins. Kenny Brown, the former walk-on turned dental student, merely added to their legacy of integrity and staying the course while others left for parts known.

They had magnificent wins over California and Arizona and at Arizona State. The Cardinal completed its regular season with a win at the College Basketball Invitational, a postseason tournament without much history but no one affiliated with Stanford was complaining.

Hall of Fame coach Tara VanDerveer had her women wipe the sleep out of their eyes after a rough ending day road trip gave Stanford a 9-3 mark heading into conference play. The Cardinal finished 33-5, reaching its second consecutive NCAA Final Four before losing in the semifinals.

The game of the season belonged to, of course, All-American center Jayne Appel. The Pac-10 Player of the Year scored a career-high 46 points in Stanford’s 74-55 victory over Iowa State in an NCAA regional final on March 30. It was the third-highest total of any NCAA contest.

The women’s basketball play of the year needs no set up. Just mention Lindy La Rocque’s name and it conjures up her defensive hustle play against California that helped set in motion Stanford’s path to the NCAA tournament. She got the assist that set in motion Stanford’s path to the NCAA title.

Redshirt senior Sho Nakamori was named Moutain Pacific Sports Federation Gymnast of the Year. He finished his Stanford career with eight All-American honors.

Noone, Tim Gentry, Alex Bascula, Kyle Oi, Ryan Lieberman and Bryant Hadden also earned All-American honors.

Jenna Levy, Erika Roddy, Di Eaton, Olympian Elle Logan, Grace Luczak, Julie Smith, Lindsay Meyer, Michelle Vezzene and Adrienne Frisch earned an NCAA title in the I Eight division in leading the Cardinal to team championship, the school’s third.

The winter sports season turned ‘cardinal’ hot for the Cardinal, which had also significant contributions from several other teams and individuals who helped the school school its 15th consecutive Director’s Cup for the best overall athletic program.

The men’s swimming team finished third in the nation. Austin Staab won an NCAA title in the 100 fly.

The women’s swimming team placed fourth at the NCAA championships. Olympians Elaine Breeden (200 fly) and Julia Smit (200 IM) won individual titles. Smit went on to establish world and American swim records and she’s not done yet.

The women’s gymnastics team reached the NCAA championships, finishing in a seventh-place tie.

The coed fencing team was ninth in the nation. Lucas Jansson (in men’s sabers) and Eva Jellison (15th in women’s saber) were the top individuals.

Stanford’s Nick Amuchastegui and Luke Feist represented the school at the NCAA wrestling championships.

The synchronized swimming team finished second at the national meet, and the women’s squash team was seventh. In indoor track, the men placed 11th and the women were 12th at the NCAA finals.

Sho Nakamori

The Redshirt se-

The final-

The final-

The final-

The final-

The final-

Sho Nakamori

The women’s volleyball team also reached the Round of 16 and junior libero Gabi Ailes became the school’s all-time digs leader. Ailx Kim, Catdly Lichtman and Janet Okogbaa were named All-American.

The field hockey team qualified for the NCAA tournament for the second time in three years and there’s a pattern developing there. The men’s cross country team was ranked first heading into the NCAA championships, winding up 10th overall as Chris Derrick finished third and was joined on the All-American list by Elliot Heath. The women’s cross country team finished 16th.

The men’s water polo team were ninth in the nation at any point in the season but were knocked out of the NCAA Fossil Fete on the day of the MPSF tournament. Jimmie Sandman, Drac Wigo and Janson Wigo were named All-American.

We come back to football, which completes the season on Dec. 31 with an appearance in the Brut Sun Bowl against Oklahoma. What do Stanford and Gerhart have in store? We’ll be watching to find out.
Support our Kids with a gift to the Holiday Fund.

Give to the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund and your donation is doubled. You give to non-profit groups that work right here in our community. It’s a great way to ensure that your charitable donations are working at home.

Each year the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund raises money to support programs serving families and children in the Palo Alto area. Since the Weekly and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation cover all of the administrative costs, every dollar raised goes directly to support community programs through grants to non-profit organizations ranging from $1,000 to $25,000.

And with the generous support of matching grants from local foundations, including the Packard and Hewlett foundations and the Peery and Arrillaga family foundations, your tax-deductible gift will be doubled in size. A donation of $100 turns into $200 with the foundation matching gifts.

Whether as an individual, a business or in honor of someone else, help us meet last year’s total of $280,000 by making a generous contribution to the Holiday Fund.

With your generosity, we can give a major boost to the programs in our community helping kids and families.

307 donors through 12/28/09 total $87,317 with match $174,634 has been raised for the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund

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(continued on next page)
**Holiday Fund (continued from previous page)**

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George & Betsy Young 100
Steven Zamek 100
*In Honor Of*
Nixon School 200
Nicole Barnhart 200

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**High schools (continued from page 18)**

High schools

Daniel Hoffman **

*Logan UTC*. He coached the Knights to a 4-3 victory over Bellarmine in their first-ever appearance in the CCS playoffs and helped his team reach the state meet. Hoffman was named the CCS Division II coach of the year.

**Businesses & Organizations**

Harrell Remodeling **
No Limit Drag Racing Team 25

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**Sports**

**2009 - The Year In Sports**

High schools

**Winning streak to the CIF Division V State Championships before seeing its excellent 31-5 season come to an end.**

* The Gunn boys’ basketball team also won the CCS Open title with a 21-1 victory over top-seeded Santa Cruz High School in the CCS Division V title match. The Vikings finished second in the NorCal semifinals before losing.

* The Palo Alto boys and girls plus the Sacred Heart Prep girls all reached CCS Section finals in 2009. The top-seeded Pal boys, who only allowed one goal in 12 league matches, wound up tying Bellarmine, 0-0, for the CCS Division I crown. Sacred Heart Prep won its first-ever West Bay Athletic League (Football Division) title and advanced to its first state title game where the Gators capped a 15-3-5 season with a 2-1 victory over top-seeded Santa Cruz High School in the CCS Division V final.

* The softball story of the spring was all about Castilleja junior pitcher Sammy Albane.**

She was the girls’ CCS Division II individual title and helping his team reach the state meet. Palo Alto senior Philip MacQuitty also capped his final year of running the hills with a top-15 finish at the state finals.

* The football program under first-year coach Bob Sykes. The Titans tied for the SCVAL El Camino Division title and qualified for the CCS playoffs for the third straight season before falling to Menlo and finishing 8-4.

* Gunn saw a resurgence in its football program this year under first-year coach Bob Sykes. The Titans tied for the SCVAL El Camino Division title and qualified for the CCS playoffs for the third straight season before falling to Menlo and finishing 8-4.

* The Sacred Heart Prep boys’ and girls’ water polo teams set their sights on winning a third consecutive CCS championship and both teams succeeded in their quest. The SHP boys became the first Division II team to win three in a row with a surprisingly easy 15-6 romp over rival Menlo. The SHP girls won a defensive battle with St. Ignatius, 6-2, with both Sacred Heart teams sending their seniors off the best way possible. The Gators’ David Culpan and Ben Dearborn shared MVP honors on the CCS Division II team while Heather Smith was the girls’ CCS Division II MVP.

As 2009 comes to a successful end, the 2010 season is ready to take its place. There are no monumental winning streaks under way just yet, but there’s plenty of time. There are plenty of quality athletes, coaches and teams to make the coming year a special one.

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For all the up-to-the-minute basketball scores and stories of this week’s high school action, go to www. PASportsOnline.com.
POST-CHRISTMAS CLEAN-UP ... Live Christmas trees (not the plastic varieties) may be cut into 4-foot lengths and left at the curb in Palo Alto on regular trash-collection day — minus the tinseL, ornaments, tree stands and nails. Pick-up scheduled for New Year’s Day will be done on Saturday, the next day. Trees may also be dropped off at no cost at the compost area of the city’s landfill, at the east end of Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto, until Feb. 1. The landfill is open daily 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For information, call GreenWaste at 650-493-4894.

NEW YEAR, NEW SKILLS ... Palo Alto Adult School is offering a variety of classes designed to improve one’s skills in gardening and home arts, including: “Floral Design with Ikebana,” Tuesdays, Jan. 5-March 9, 1 to 4 p.m. (Thanh Kosen Nguyen, Cubberley B-2, $65 + $100 flower materials fee payable to instructor); “Upholstering: Basic Techniques,” Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Jan. 5-March 9, or Thursdays, Jan. 7-March 11, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (Marjorie DuBois, Ann Laveroni, Kathleen Koenig and Ann Rose, Palo Alto High School Upholstering Room 904, $195); “Gardening,” Wednesdays, Jan. 6-March 10, 10 a.m. to noon (Sherri Bohan, Cubberley A-2, $35); “Sewing,” Wednesdays, Jan. 6-March 10, 7 to 10 p.m. (DeAnne Appleton, JLS Middle School Sewing Room 140, $65 + $10 materials fee payable to the instructor). To register, visit www.paadultschool.org or call 650-329-3752.

TRACKING STORMS ... If you live near a creek, you might want to keep your eye on creek levels during major storms. Visit www.cityofpaloalto.org/earlywarning/creekmonitor.html for real-time information at five locations, including San Francisquito, Matadero and Adobe creeks, rainfall at Foothills Park and tide levels. Sandbags will be available at the Palo Alto Airport (end of Embarcadero Road and Mitchell Park, 600 E. Meadow Drive, Palo Alto. To contact Palo Alto Public Works about blocked storm drains (and mudslides), call 650-493-6974 between 7 a.m. and 4 p.m., or 650-329-2413 after hours.)

Send notices of news and events related to real estate, yard design, home improvement and gardening to Home Front, Palo Alto Weekly, P.O. Box 1610, Palo Alto, CA 94302, or e-mail citizen@paweekly.com. Deadline is Thursday at 5 p.m.

Mary Saxton moved in 2000 “because the Palo Alto public schools were better than Menlo’s.”

“I generally feel safe here. ... It’s a pleasant quiet neighborhood,” she said.

She likes the amenities such as the library, grocery and nearby Mitchell Park.

“There are quite a few events at the park. They have concerts and a Fourth of July picnic,” she said.

According to Jacobi, the whole neighborhood gets into the act for the annual block party. “We’ve got singers and a band. There’s a cabaret singer down the street. Of course there are professors. One made ice cream out of air. The kids loved it.”

Residents have high standards for their neighborhood and are always looking for ways to improve it.

Saxton said there should be an update to the city library on Middlefield Road. “I wish they’d get around to it. There were these drawings and mock-ups, and they all looked beautiful. They’ve done nothing,” she said.

Jacobi doesn’t want Middlefield Road and Alma Street turned into thoroughfares and worries that the shuttle that goes downtown might get cut from the city budget.

According to Griffiths, “the Safe-way on Middlefield is, I believe, the smallest one in Northern California. We had hoped for a substantial grocery store at Alma Plaza, with many features not currently available in Palo Alto, but that plan is now being thwarted.”
Sales are provided by California RealSource, a real estate information company that obtains the information from the County Recorder’s Office. Information is recorded from deeds after the close of escrow and published within four to eight weeks.

**East Palo Alto**

**Los Altos**

- 1507 Arbor Ave., L. A. Crawford to P. & S. Blanchfield for $1,800,000 on 12/14/09
- 1640 Dallas Street, Hesselgrave-Nelson Trust to K. L. Noujaim for $1,460,000 on 12/10/09
- 4388 El Camino Real #389, Los Altos West to H. Chow for $800,000 on 12/10/09
- 4388 El Camino Real #390, Los Altos West to J. Rowland for $455,000 on 11/11/09
- 305 Fremont Ave., Beltramo Trust to L. Byrd for $1,390,000 on 11/25/09, previous sale 6/95, $145,000
- 221 Hillview Ave, Chao Trust to A. Z. Ibaran for $1,600,000 on 12/9/09
- 1035 Langston Ave., D. Stenberg to W. R. King for $1,499,000 on 12/3/09, previous sale 9/03, $1,083,000
- 1035 Leonello Ave., S. Stitan to F. & R. Fry for $1,700,000 on 12/22/09, previous sale 11/3, $1,131,000
- 2 Los Altos Square, Wilson Trust to L. Wong for $1,800,000 on 12/3/09, previous sale 11/3, $715,000
- 1530 Medlars Drive, H. Corbett to T. & A. Frehner for $1,390,000 on 12/19/09
- 881 Parma Way, H. Adipardar to X. Sun 6-4 Coldwell Banker 851-2666
- H. Adipardar to X. Sun 6-4 Coldwell Banker 851-2666
- 348 Haysboro Ave., L. & A. Crawford to T. & H. Lofano for $590,000 on 11/13/09
- 1244 Mandarin Ave., S. Stitan to F. & R. Fry for $1,700,000 on 12/22/09, previous sale 11/3, $1,131,000
- 305 Fremont Ave., Beltramo Trust to L. Byrd for $1,390,000 on 11/25/09, previous sale 6/95, $145,000
- 168 Wisteria Drive, CWMB Inc. to J. N. Fiala for $205,000 on 11/18/09, previous sale 7/02, $380,000

**Menlo Park**

- 656 9th Ave., L. Wong for $785,000 on 12/3/09
- 102 Coitledge Ave., Traugott Trust to E. & K. Lobaugh for $700,000 on 11/25/09, previous sale 8/93, $350,000
- 905 Cowper St., W. Wong to R. & P. Stich for $1,350,000 on 12/3/09, previous sale 6/04, $920,000
- 45 Forest View Rd, R. A. Holder to R. Peon for $1,300,000 on 11/25/09, previous sale 7/05, $1,175,000
- 112 Forest Ave, R. Bultman to M. & B. Fisch for $1,300,000 on 11/25/09

**Menlo Park**

- 656 9th Ave., L. Wong for $785,000 on 12/3/09
- 102 Coitledge Ave., W. Wong to R. & P. Stich for $1,350,000 on 12/3/09, previous sale 6/04, $920,000
- 905 Cowper St., W. Wong to R. & P. Stich for $1,350,000 on 12/3/09, previous sale 6/04, $920,000
- 112 Forest Ave, R. Bultman to M. & B. Fisch for $1,300,000 on 11/25/09

**Mountain View**

- 211 El Monte Ave, Jacobson Trust to B. Tran for $1,025,000 on 12/4/09

**Silicon Valley REALTORS® Charitable Foundation Donations Total For 2009**

The Silicon Valley REALTORS® Charitable Foundation donated $36,250 in 2009 to different non-profit organizations that help homeless and low-income individuals and families in Silicon Valley. The Silicon Valley REALTORS® Charitable Foundation is a trust which makes grants available to organizations from its donations by its REALTORS®, affiliate members and friends of the Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS®. The 2009 grant recipients are from SILVAR's five districts - Los Altos, Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Mountain View and East Palo Alto. The 2009 grant recipients are from SILVAR's five districts - Los Altos, Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Mountain View and East Palo Alto.

**YOUR REALTOR AND YOU**

- The impact on the recipient organization;
- The location of the community served;
- The financial strength and efficiency of the organization;
- Accuracy and completeness of the application;
- The structure of volunteer organization and level of volunteer support.

Applications must be received by Feb. 15, May 15, Aug. 15, and Nov. 15 in order to be considered at the quarterly meeting. For more information and details about the Charitable Foundation grants and an application form, visit www.silvar.org, or call the Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS® at (408) 200-0100. Information provided in this column is presented by the Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS® at www.silvar.org.
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• Our adjudication includes the Mid-Peninsula Communities of Palo Alto, Stanford, Los Altos, and Mountain View.

• The Palo Alto Weekly publishes every Friday.

Deadline: Noon Tuesday

Call Alicia Santillan (650) 326-8210 x8578 to assist you with your legal advertising needs.

E-mail asantillan@paweekeeper.com

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