Deal reached over back-to-school plan

Page 7

Mask Up—Or Pay

As COVID spreads, county to fine those not wearing face coverings

Page 5
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**Wine to go ... yes, wine and cocktails to go!**

50% off of wine bottles to go
Not wearing a mask? Expect to be fined

County adopts penalties as state threatens to get tough on counties that don’t crack down
by Kevin Forestieri and Lloyd Lee

Violating public health orders in Santa Clara County now carries a hefty fine of up to $500, giving teeth to mask requirements and social-distancing rules in Santa Clara County that have been in effect for months.

The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved an ordinance Tuesday that places civil penalties on people and businesses that disregard public health orders, which mandate wearing a mask in public spaces and maintaining a physical distance of 6 feet from others. Repeat offenders will get hit with stiffer fines, while less egregious, first-time violations will be met with the equivalent of a “fix-it” ticket.

Enforcement of these rules has been lax since they were imposed in March, but the soft reopening of numerous businesses and a recent surge of cases in the region has county health officials worried that the public health order won’t be effective without at least the threat of fines. County Supervisor Joe Simitian, who represents the northern end of the county, said that lives are at stake and there must be a reasonable deterrent for those who flout the law.

“The order already has been promulgated two months ago. The question is whether or not we’re going to enforce the order in some way,” Simitian said at the Aug. 11 supervisors meeting. “Are we going to be serious about the order? Or are we just going to say our orders have no meaning if they come from the public health officer because there’s no enforcement tool?”

Santa Clara was among the counties that have been lax since they were imposed.

Not wearing a mask? Expect to be fined (continued on page 28)

Happy trails
A bicyclist rides along the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District’s latest trail extension at the Ravenswood Preserve in East Palo Alto on Aug. 11.

Council spars over new housing goal
Some oppose, others support regional mandates
by Gennady Sheyner

A state push to more than double the Bay Area’s construction of housing in the next eight years is stoking opposition in Palo Alto, with some City Council members characterizing the new goals as unrealistic, unachievable and largely unfunded.

The city is still waiting to see how many housing units it will have to plan for in the next Regional Housing Needs Allocation cycle, which will stretch from 2023 to 2031. But city leaders know the number will be significantly higher than in the past.

The state recently determined that the Bay Area needs to plan for 441,176 homes over the eight-year period. Now, it’s up to two regional agencies, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Association of Bay Area Governments, to determine how much housing each Bay Area county should be required to plan for in each income category.

Under any scenario, Palo Alto would have to aim significantly higher on housing. If the regional agencies choose to base the new allocations on the 2019 numbers (and assume population growth of 16%), Palo Alto would need to plan for 4,475 new housing units between 2023 and 2031. That’s more than double the 1,988-unit allocation that the city is trying to meet in the current eight-year cycle. So far, Palo Alto has issued 554 building permits, new housing, given that it’s zoned for multifamily residential use and is generally deemed to be underdeveloped. The city’s Housing Element identifies the property as the place for up to 249 residential units.

There’s a catch, however. The council granted Fry’s Electronics in 1999 a zoning exemption so it could remain at the old cannery building, an exception that the council voted in 2006 to make permanent in order to give Fry’s some assurances about its future. Then Fry’s moved out last December.

As Target eyes Fry’s building, Palo Alto rethinks its housing plan
Property owner requests zone change to accommodate large retailer, other commercial space
by Gennady Sheyner

With prospects for housing at the former site of Fry’s Electronics fading, Palo Alto leaders and Ventura neighborhood residents are preparing to accept a far more modest proposal for the old cannery building on Portage Avenue: an assortment of retail and office space anchored by a small Target store.

The question of what will happen to the sprawling complex at 340 Portage Ave. has been — and remains — at the heart the city’s yearslong debate over Ventura’s future and the city’s housing strategy. The City Council has for more than decade eyed the Fry’s building and the surrounding area as the city’s most suitable site for new housing, given that it’s zoned for multifamily residential use and is generally deemed to be underdeveloped. The city’s Housing Element identifies the property as the place for up to 249 residential units.

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BOOKISH BUDDIES ... The coronavirus pandemic has increased the demand for a local youth group that has logged more than 1,000 hours over the past eight weeks to help students get ready for this coming academic year. Summer Learning Buddies is made up of nine volunteers who have assisted English-language learners, students with dyslexia and children who fall in the achievement gap. The volunteers, who are 10 to 19 years old, have built a library of phonics lessons that have made a significant impact on the children they serve. The cause is personal for 15-year-old Ashima Sima, a rising Gunn High School sophomore and co-director of the program. Her younger brother, who has struggled with reading and writing, has benefited from the lessons. She said being involved with the program has also shown her the importance of patience and communication while working with others.

NEW LEADERSHIP ... A woman who has made an impact on local philanthropy, media, entrepreneurship and advocacy has taken the helm at the Palo Alto Community Fund. The organization announced this week its new executive director, Lisa Van Dusen, who was recently chief relationship officer at Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund. Van Dusen, a former employee of Embarcadero Media, the Palo Alto Weekly’s parent company, was also host of the newspaper’s “First Person” video interviews. “The Palo Alto Community Fund has been a hidden gem and a much-needed bridge connecting the unparalleled resources in our community with our equally staggering and growing needs,” she said.

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What can you do to fight racism in your community? These young activists have some ideas.

High school and college students of color share experiences with activism

by Elena Kadvany

Three young Black women who have been leading efforts to bring about social change on the Midpeninsula expressed a mix of optimism and pessimism, motivation and anger during an Aug. 6 virtual panel about the roles they’ve assumed as activists — and the experiences with systemic racism that propelled them into action.

“I’m mad I have to be an activist, but it’s something I look forward to fighting,” Hele’ine Grewe, a rising Menlo-Atherton High School senior who lives in East Palo Alto, said about criminal justice reform.

The three, plus a high school senior, spoke on a panel on Generation Z and social justice, moderated by former Stanford University Dean of Freshmen and Undergraduate Advising Julie Lythcott-Haims and presented by Embarcadero Media and the non-profit Youth Community Service.

The panelists included Grewe; Cleo Goodwin, a 2018 Gunn High School graduate; Makayla Miller, a 2020 Palo Alto High School graduate; and Divya Ganesan, a rising senior at Castilleja School.

The panelists’ recent activism has ranged from organizing Black Lives Matter protests to founding a nonprofit that encourages political discourse among young people.

Each of the Black panelists shared experiences of racism in local schools, from casual racial jokes to teachers using the N-word. Goodwin recalled a classroom lesson on stop-and-frisk at Gunn and the teacher who pointed at her and every student of color who would have been affected by the law.

Feeling ostracized for their skin color on campuses with mostly white students took a personal and emotional describing the isolation she felt as the only Black student in an accelerated English class she took at Menlo-Atherton her junior year.

“I was scared a lot of times to ask for help. It felt like everyone tried to ignore me and avoid me,” she said. “It’s hard being an outcast. It’s hard when you’re seen as a Black person in a class and you shouldn’t talk to them because they’re different.”

The young women advocated for incorporating more Black history into curriculum, hiring more teachers of color and providing deeper anti-racism training to educators. Grewe transferred to M-A from Oxford Day Academy, a public charter school in East Palo Alto, where her English teacher was a Black woman rather than a white man.

Ganesan, co-founder of Real Talk, a nonprofit that encourages youth political engagement and discourse, said she’s been starting conversations about race and anti-Blackness in her South Asian community, particularly with her grandparents. She said her activism stemmed from realizing her own privilege — “feeling as if I’ve been living in a bubble and that bubble needs to somehow break” and is

(continued on page 30)
When Crescent Park resident Ajit Varma says Palo Alto has a big problem, he means business. As a director of products at WhatsApp, he’s been interacting with companies from around the globe as they try to recover from virus-induced shutdowns. And he is increasingly worried by what he sees in his own hometown, where businesses are struggling to stay open and where city leaders are perennially failing to meet their housing goals.

These trends, he believes, are diminishing the city’s long-enjoyed status as a beacon of opportunity. A Texas native who moved to Palo Alto two decades ago to pursue a career in technology, Varma is hoping to be elected to the council so he can start reversing this trend. On Aug. 7, he filed his papers to join a crowded race for three council seats.

“We came to Palo Alto because of opportunity, and we want the next person, who wants the same opportunities, to have them,” Varma, 40, told the Weekly. “For my kids, and the next person who comes to Palo Alto, I want to say, ‘You have the same opportunities that people have had 10 or 20 years ago.’ Every single race should have those opportunities. Every single viewpoint should have those opportunities.”

More so than other candidates, Varma believes the council has gone in the wrong direction when it comes to supporting the business community and helping it to grow. While council members have long talked about the need for a business tax (they had planned to place such a tax on the November ballot before halting the plan in March in the face of the pandemic), Varma seeks to “eradicate damaging business taxes,” according to his campaign website.

He also disapproves of the council’s strategy on limiting commercial development, which in recent years included the adoption of an annual office cap in the city’s three main commercial areas and a reduction in the citywide limit on nonresidential growth. The council’s primary goal with these actions was to address the city’s high jobs-to-housing imbalance by reducing office growth and encouraging the construction of more residential projects.

Varma believes this is a failed and misguided strategy. Rather than capping office space, he believes the city should be encouraging mixed-use developments in which offices subsidize housing, particularly below-market-rate housing. In his view, the city can achieve both economic growth and housing construction by fostering mixed-use communities such as Santana Row in San Jose or San Jose and the ones that Google and Facebook are pursuing in Mountain View and Menlo Park, respectively.

“It is always presented as trade-off, like you can have one or the other but you can’t have both.” Varma said, referring to commercial and residential developments. “I feel we’re in a situation where we have neither, and we have failed at both.”

Varma, who worked at Square and Google before Facebook (the parent company of WhatsApp), believes the city’s office restrictions and lengthy permitting processes have created a difficult business environment — a problem that will make the city’s recovery from the COVID-19 recession all the longer and more difficult.

“I’m really worried that with our policies in Palo Alto being so anti-business — with getting permits being very difficult, with the office caps — we’re discouraging businesses from being in Palo Alto,” he said.

He is also concerned about the impact of Palo Alto’s housing shortage on the city’s social dynamics. He said he has seen more people leave the region because of the astronomical living costs. Just a few years ago, companies like Pinterest and DoorDash departed Palo Alto to go to San Francisco. Many of his friends, even those who are well-off, have concluded in which offices subsidize housing, particularly below-market-rate housing. In his view, the city can achieve both economic growth and housing construction by fostering mixed-use communities such as Santana Row in San Jose or the ones that Google and Facebook are pursuing in Mountain View and Menlo Park, respectively.

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the vast majority of them in the “moderate” or “above moderate” income categories. Other factors, which are meant to promote equity and create housing near jobs and public transit, could make Palo Alto’s housing allocations even higher. For example, a methodology that prioritizes a link between jobs and transportation would raise Palo Alto’s allocation by about 24%, requiring it to plan for 6,532 new units.

In addition to advancing the housing-allocation process, the two regional planning agencies are also now developing a long-range planning document called Plan Bay Area 2050 for the nine Bay Area counties. Staff from Palo Alto’s Planning and Development Services Department estimates that under some of the proposed growth strategies in Plan Bay Area 2050, the city would have to zone for between 11,000 and 15,000 housing units over the next eight-year cycle. Planning staff noted in a new report that an expectation that the city would increase its housing supply by 55% over the next eight years is “clearly unattainable.”

The council agreed on Monday that just about any target beyond the 2019 baseline would be impossible to meet, though members clashed over how to express their opposition. Some blasted the entire allocation process, while others lauded its goals and acknowledged the need to be more aggressive on housing. Ultimately, a four-member majority of Mayor Adrian Fine and council members Alison Cormack, Liz Kniss and Greg Tanaka endorsed a letter that urged ABAG’s Housing Methodology Committee to use the 2019 allocation (with 16% projected growth) to determine the next housing targets.

A three-member minority of Vice Mayor Tom DuBois and council members Eric Filseth and Lydia Kou argued that the allocation process is inherently flawed and that the regional agencies should come up with a new model with lower housing obligations for cities that are proactively limiting job growth. All seven council members acknowledged the need to be more aggressive on housing. Ultimately, a four-member majority of Mayor Adrian Fine and council members Alison Cormack, Liz Kniss and Greg Tanaka endorsed a letter that urged ABAG’s Housing Methodology Committee to use the 2019 allocation (with 16% projected growth) to determine the next housing targets.

The letter that the council approved by a 4-3 vote argued that any approach that goes beyond the 2019 “baseline” would effectively set up cities for dramatic failure. The regional growth plan requires “significant economic investment and an extraordinary amount of regional policy collaboration to implement its vision."

“Building a methodology today that is actionable over the next eight years and relies on an idealized model depicting a regional housing distribution 30 years from now ignores the reality that the infrastructure, funding and local regulatory framework is simply not yet present to achieve this goal,” the letter states.

Signed by City Manager Ed Shikada, the letter also notes that the city recognizes its role in stimulating more housing, particularly “more equitable and inclusive housing for all.”

DuBois, Filseth and Kou, who favor slower city growth, suggested that the proposed regional model is unduly burdensome on west Santa Clara County, the area that the regional agencies project to see the heaviest growth in jobs and housing. All three argued that regional agencies should develop a new model that considers job restrictions as a factor in allocating housing units. Because Palo Alto has an annual cap on office development in three main commercial areas (as well as a citywide cap on nonresidential growth), its housing obligations would be lowered under such a model.

“We need to get our arms around this jobs thing as well, if we’re ever going to get out from under this rock, especially the affordable-housing rock, without doing unnatural things that create more demand for it than actual supply,” Filseth said. “We’ve got to get that idea more socialized in the world. I think it’s an important one, and I don’t understand why we wouldn’t take this opportunity to take a little leadership on that because I think most Palo Altans support it.”

Before the Monday meeting, DuBois, Kou and Filseth co-authored an alternate letter urging the Housing Methodology Committee to consider “upper limits on allocation” for communities that “proactively seek to address their jobs/housing imbalance.”

“Balancing jobs-housing growth at the city level is an important and realistically achievable first step towards regional sustainability,” their letter stated.

DuBois called the new housing targets a “clear threat to charter cities.” That’s because cities that fall well short of the regional targets will become subject to regional policy collaboration to implement its vision.”

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**City Council (Aug. 10)**

**Housing:** The council approved submitting a letter to the Association of Bay Area Governments supporting a methodology for housing allocation based on the 2019 baseline. **Yes:** Cormack, Fine, Kniss, Tanaka. **No:** DuBois, Filseth, Kou. **Dining:** The council approved extending the outdoor dining program on California and University avenues until the end of the year and to extend permits for parklets until September 2021. **Yes:** Unanimous

**Board of Education (Aug. 11)**

**Lexia Learning:** The board approved a three-year contract with Lexia Learning, an online reading program for K-8 students. **Yes:** Unanimous

**Reopening:** The board discussed special education, the PMSID+ support program and other reopening issues. **Action:** None

**Planning and Transportation Commission (Aug. 12)**

788 San Antonio Road: The commission recommended approving a proposed 102-unit development at 788 San Antonio Road and supported the applicability of the Housing Incentive Program to San Antonio Road. The commission also recommended that the council conduct a land use and transportation analysis of the Housing Incentive Program to San Antonio Road. The commission recommended approving a proposed 102-unit development at 788 San Antonio Road and supported the applicability of the Housing Incentive Program to San Antonio Road. The commission also recommended that the council conduct a land use and transportation analysis of the Housing Incentive Program to San Antonio Road.

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**Housing (continued from page 9)**

the provisions of Senate Bill 35, which requires them to approve residential developments through a streamlined process.

“I think failure to meet those numbers is going to mean over-ride of local land use” authority, DuBois said. “And control of local land use is really one of the reasons we have local governments. It’s the idea that local representation can understand the local conditions best.”

DuBois wondered on Monday whether the city should “willingly participate in a process where we’re set up to fail, and that’s leading us to relinquishing our rights as a city.” Kou agreed and suggested that in establishing aggressive housing goals for Santa Clara County, the regional agencies have failed to consider recent trends, including the shift by employees to telecommuting and the disruptions in transportation services.

While DuBois characterized the regional allocation as an “unfunded mandate,” Fine countered that the state directives are necessary to prod cities such as Palo Alto to do better on housing.

“I think our community and, specifically, this council has never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity on housing,” Fine said. “We have shown an unwillingness to solve this problem locally, using the local control we have to actually build new market rate housing and affordable housing.

“Of course, we as a city don’t build it, but we create conditions by which home builders do it, and we failed at that. In my opinion, that’s why we actually need regional and state guidance on planning. Otherwise, cities like ours are going to wilt on the vine.”

Cormack and Kniss similarly favored a more cooperative and less adversarial approach. As Kou and DuBois pushed for the city to consider legal options or lobbying strategies to modify or delay the allocation process, Cormack suggested that the city is “not an island” and that it will have to “operate beyond our borders in ways that perhaps we hadn’t had to before.”

The full council agreed that identifying funding for affordable housing will be a major barrier. While Filseth and DuBois pointed to the funding gap for below-market-rate housing as evidence why the regional plan is unrealistic, Kniss suggested that the city can generate local funding for housing by approving commercial projects.

“Most cities fund their affordable housing through building offices. Unless we find another way in our city of raising money to go for affordable housing, we are going to be stuck where we are right now,” Kniss said. **Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be emailed at gsheyner@paweekly.com.**
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School board president
decides to pursue second term
In Palo Alto race, five are vying for three openings
by Elena Kadvany

Citizens Oversight Committee and served on the Enrollment Management Advisory Committee, which in 2015 and 2016 evaluated the possibility of opening new district schools. He also serves on the board of directors of DreamCatchers, a nonprofit that provides tutoring and other support to low-income and minority students.

In 2016, Collins won 21% of the vote behind the top vote-getter, DiBrienzo, who won 28.7%.

Jesse Ladomirak

Jesse Ladomirak believes her experience as a parent of four children who attend district schools is needed on a board tasked with the unprecedented challenges of public education during a global pandemic.

“It feels imperative now more than ever that people on the school board have the lived experience of families and children in this district. Having people on the school board with kids who are currently enrolled in PAUSD feels like the only way that effective governance can happen right now because nothing about schooling right now is like anything any of us have ever experienced,” she said in an interview.

Ladomirak was born and raised in Palo Alto and graduated from the school district. She was a practicing attorney for several years, representing public agencies, cities and transportation districts, before she and her husband unexpectedly became co-owners of Treeen, a remodeling company. She left her law firm job when she had her first child and focused on her new role as general manager and chief financial officer of Treeen.

During college and into her adult years, Ladomirak has worked with children, including through child development nonprofits in New Haven, Connecticut; a Head Start program in rural Pennsylvania; at the Opportunity Center in Palo Alto, where she tutored homeless and low-income youth; and for the last six years with All Students Matter, a nonprofit that connects volunteers with Ravenswood City School District teachers and students.

She said she extended her focus on social justice to her remodeling company, setting out to prove in an “industry that treats people as disposable” that carpenters, painters and other skilled laborers can be paid well and treated fairly.

Ladomirak has two biological children and two adopted children of color, three at Addison Elementary School and one at Green Middle School.

Running for a seat on the school board wasn’t part of Ladomirak’s plan until recently. She said she had been working with a group of parents to find a candidate who is “committed to issues of educational equity.” That person ended up being her.

The school closures have exacerbated educational and socioeconomic inequities in the school district, as well as student mental health concerns. Ladomirak didn’t say how exactly she’d address these issues differently if elected but said she’d bring a persistent, analytical focus to both areas.

“I am less worried about some how criticizing or thinking I can perfect what the district is offering,” she said. “I am much more worried about being a voice that is constantly advocating for self-critique.”

She said she’s hopeful that a “critical mass” of board members who are also focused on improving outcomes for low-income and minority students would help spark systemic, sustained progress. If elected, she said she’d press for an “equity audit,” using software and experts to identify where the district is failing students of color.

“Sometimes there’s been this divide in PAUSD between the students whom the district is serving extraordinarily well and students that are not being served well,” Ladomirak said. “These issues are structural ... and they need a different kind of approach than what we’ve been giving them for decades.”

Ladomirak said she’s less familiar with how the school board operates as a body but has been “impressed” by its level of responsiveness to parents. She said she would similarly strive to be a proactive, accessible board member who focuses on problem-solving, whatever the issue.

“The first step to solving a problem is identifying the problem. Where are we trying to go? What are we trying to fix? And then working on fixing it,” she said.

Staff Writer Elena Kadvany can be emailed at ekadvany@paweeke.com.
Real estate is extremely complex so my approach to leadership is to educate. Laws are changing all the time so the more I can share what’s happening, the better off our agents and clients will be.

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Mary Katherine Dybdahl
September 28, 1939 – July 25, 2020

Mary Katherine Dybdahl passed away peacefully on July 25, 2020 at the age of 80. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband Harlan Dybdahl. She will be deeply missed by her son David Dybdahl, daughter Tracy Everson, son-in-law Bryan Everson, grandchildren Cameron Everson and Reece Everson, sisters Carolyn Chapman and Janice Berndt and brother Larry Lee. Mary was born in Valley City, ND to Harold Lee and Katherine Lee (enkins), the youngest of five children. She went to high school in Aberdeen, SD and graduated from nursing school with her RN in Huron, SD. She married Harlan Dybdahl in 1960, creating a partnership that spanned 47 years full of laughter and family adventures with their children David and Tracy. Mary and Harlan lived in Europe and Japan for many years, and traveled the world building lasting friendships and wonderful memories. They moved to San Carlos a few years after returning from Japan, where she worked as a Physician Liaison for Stanford Hospital. She moved to Mountain View after Harlan passed in 2007, where she worked at El Camino Hospital until she retired. Mary loved to beautifully decorate her homes and create the most wonderful gardens. She was a voracious reader, lover of animals, enthusiastic traveler, and ardent hiker. She loved scrapbooking, visiting with her family and friends, live theatre, and a good movie. She adored her children and grandchildren, and was a wonderful friend to many. She will be grievously missed by all.

Ray Simpson Stewart
December 26, 1961 – August 1, 2020

Ray Simpson Stewart, a pioneer in the development of the Silicon Valley electronics industry, passed away peacefully on Saturday, August 1st at his home in Redwood City, CA due to complications from non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. He was 93.

Ray first came to the Palo Alto area in 1953 when he was asked by his employer, Convair, to participate in the testing of Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTO) aircraft at Moffett Field in Mountain View. From there, he became involved with the development of the video recorder at Ampex Corporation. He and several colleagues from Ampex formed Datamec Corp., which was sold to Hewlett Packard in 1965, and he then became President of Data Memory, Inc., a company that produced instant replay for television. Ray continued to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors in the electronics industry in Silicon Valley for the remainder of his career.

Born in Honolulu, HI on December 16, 1926, Ray was the second son of Col. William Robert Stewart (USA, Ret.) and Mary Agnes Simpson. His father was a career Army officer, which led the family to live in numerous places around the world, including Alcatraz Island, where Col. Stewart was the last military warden of the prison prior to it becoming a Federal penitentiary in 1934. The family then moved to Corregidor, Philippines, and Fort Stevens, OR, where Col. Stewart was the commanding officer, and then Seattle, prior to finally settling in Palo Alto, CA just before World War II. Ray graduated from La Jolla High School and attended UCLA for one year before he was drafted into the US Navy, where he was fortunate enough to be enrolled in an electronics training program. Following his discharge from the Navy, Ray completed his college degree at San Diego State College, where he was a founding member of the Theta Chi fraternity. He earned an MBA degree from Stanford University Graduate School of Business, graduating in 1951.

In 1953, Ray married Jean Carol Anderson, whom he met at Convair in San Diego, and they raised five children together in Los Altos and Atherton, CA prior to their divorce in 1972. Midlife, Ray became very involved in running and participated in numerous marathons, including New York, Boston, and the International, and track events, including the USATF Masters Outdoor Championships in Eugene, OR in 1994. He was also part of a team that continues to hold the world record for the 70+ Men’s age group for the 4 X 800 relay set at the USATF Masters Outdoor Championships in San Jose in 1997. He was an active member and Executive Director of Fifty Plus, an organization to promote fitness for seniors. Ray was also an avid traveler and enjoyed traveling with his family to all parts of the world.

Ray’s second wife, Norma Pappas, whom he married in 2006, died in 2019. Ray was predeceased earlier this year by his older brother, William Robert Stewart, Jr. (USAF, Ret.) of San Antonio, TX and he is survived by his younger brother, Stanley Hays Stewart (Masako), of La Jolla, CA. Ray is also survived by his five children: Sandra Stewart MacPhail of Portland, OR, Claire Stewart Kostic (Mark) of Atherton, CA, Sharon Stewart of Ukiah, CA, Kim Stewart of Los Altos, CA, and David Stewart (Paula) of Los Altos, CA. In addition, he is survived by nine grandchildren: Sheldon Stevenson, Jeffrey Stevenson, Craig Stevenson, Kristen Hanafee, Sean Hanafee, Emily Bortz, Edward Bortz, Camila Stewart and Giana Stewart, and two great-grandchildren: Finn Stevenson and Charles Stevenson.

Due to circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic, burial services and celebration of life will be private. The family requests that in lieu of flowers donations be made to Stanford Medicine Cancer Discovery Fund, the Lymphoma Research Foundation, or Pathways Hospice.
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1 Thayer Road, Bonny Doon · $20,000,000

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447 Westridge Drive, Portola Valley · $10,995,000
2050 Green Oaks Way, Pescadero · $7,500,000

SALE PENDING
1327 Waverley, Palo Alto · $6,500,000
728 La Para Avenue, Palo Alto · $4,995,000

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Letters

Castilleja’s modernization

Editor,

I am writing in response to the positive news about the Final Environmental Impact Report for Castilleja School’s modernization. It is very exciting that there is now a new alternative that is both environmentally superior and has no significant impacts. I attended the Planning and Transportation Commission hearing last summer, and I am so gratified that Castilleja has addressed the core concerns I heard voiced there. With the much smaller garage design and dispersed drop off, Castilleja has retained homes to keep the neighborhood feel, preserved beloved trees and eliminated the traffic impacts.

Bravo to Castilleja for developing this excellent solution and thoughtful compromise. I appreciate the time and care that went into studying the findings in the Draft Environmental Impact Report, listening to neighbors and responding creatively. I look forward to seeing our community come together around the good work Castilleja has done as the project is now able to move forward into another phase.

Even more, I am thrilled that Castilleja’s enrollment increase is supported in this report. Now more than ever, offering this unique educational opportunity for a more diverse set of young women is a mandate for a city like Palo Alto. While there are so many things we can disagree about as we watch our state, nation and planet struggle through the pressures of current events, education is always part of every solution for a better future for all.

Trisha Savari
Iris Way, Palo Alto

Thank you, Sara Cody

Editor,

Thank you County Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody for your expert navigation and leadership in the coronavirus crisis and for standing up to the ignorant bullies trying to intimidate you. Don’t give up the fight!

We know we speak for thousands of Santa Clara County and Bay Area residents who are grateful that you remain on the job, using your expertise to protect us in the greatest public health crisis of our lifetimes. Nearly all of us are well aware that the coronavirus is a deadly threat and that science (not wishful thinking) must guide the response. We also know that strong measures are needed to control the threat, and that we can’t return to normal while a lethal pathogen stalks us.

Please know that your work is understood, appreciated and supported.

Mitchell Zimmerman
Jane Zimmerman
Maybell Avenue, Palo Alto

In response to ‘To get OK for school expansion, Castilleja proposes plan with lesser traffic impacts’

Posted July 30 at 8:50 p.m. by Eduardo F. Llach, a resident of Southgate:

“My grandmother went to Castilleja (School) over 100 years ago, and the great education she received continues to this day. My kids needed different help at different times and benefited from options available to them. They graduated from Palo but went to the German American school for the first seven years, which helped them get a perspective they wouldn’t have been able to get. My kids benefited from scholarships, similar to the ones available from Castilleja. Options and variety are key to the success of our children. Palo Alto is proud of its history, Castilleja has been part of it for over 100 years. I’m proud of my grandmother, and I’m proud to support Castilleja.”

In response to ‘Palo Alto’s COVID-19 numbers are growing’

Posted Aug. 9 at 10:25 a.m. by Neelsoon Buchanan, a resident of Downtown North:

“Thanks for this alert. We need the Santa Clara and San Mateo county experts to provide more data and longer-term analysis. Health care statistics for small geographic regions, especially ZIP codes, are tricky and I urge Palo Alto Online to follow up for your readers.”

In response to ‘Palo Alto moves to expand access to residents-only Foothills Park’

Posted Aug. 4 at 9:39 a.m. by Eric Filseth, a resident of Downtown North:

“This notion that ‘some issues are too important for voters who might disagree with me, and I’ll decide what those issues are,’ floated around in the SB50 discussion last year and came up last night from a few corners as well. We ought to watch out for that one. We may expect it from Trump, but the government ought to work for residents, not the other way round. Democracy isn’t perfect, just better than the alternatives.”

In response to ‘Palo Alto mayor will not seek reelection to City Council’

Posted Aug. 6 at 5:52 p.m. by Ken Horowitz, a resident of Downtown North:

“Thank you Adrian (Fine) for your service these past four years. Not an easy task being on the Palo Alto City Council, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic crisis. You added a lot to the Council especially being a renter. Hope you continue to live here with your new family member and housing becomes affordable for young families like yours. Best wishes, stay safe and be well.”

In response to ‘Meet the seven candidates vying for two seats on the Ravenswood school board’

Posted Aug. 11 at 11:10 a.m. by Mark Di nan, a resident of East Palo Alto:

“I am encouraged by Bronwyn Alexander’s comments regarding marketing Ravenswood City School District Schools to parents in East Palo Alto. I’ve asked school board members multiple times, ‘What is your strategy for attracting the children of middle-class households in East Palo Alto to enroll in Ravenswood City School District Schools?’ I’ve never heard a good answer, and I know many parents in East Palo Alto who currently send their kids to Tinsley Schools, private schools, charter schools and homeschool who have never been recruited to send their kids to local schools.”

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Palo Alto Weekly encourages comments on our coverage or on issues of local interest.

What do you think of the county’s mask fines?

Submit letters to the editor of up to 300 words to letters@paweekly.com. Submit guest opinions of 1,000 words to editor@paweekly.com. Include your name, address and daytime phone number so we can reach you. We reserve the right to edit contributions for length, objectionable content, libel and factual errors known to us. Anonymous letters will generally not be accepted. Submitting a letter to the editor or guest opinion constitutes a granting of permission to the Palo Alto Weekly and Embarcadero Media to also publish it online, including in our online archives and as a post on Town Square. For more information, contact Editorial Assistant Lloyd Lee at lle@paweekly.com or 650-223-6520 or Editor Jocelyn Dong at editor@paweekly.com.
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Take a bow, Weekly staff, for garnering your well deserved glory. Without you we would be banging around in the dark not knowing half of what was going on in town, with our people or at city hall. That 40th Anniversary issue was dynamite, and Veronica’s photo essay “Rethinking Waste” was odd and interesting. Gennady, Sue and Elena, we’ve come to trust that you will be our eyes and ears day after day, and you do that so well. Bill’s editorials are our good fortune — and also that he thought up Embarcadero Media. I have no idea how Jocelyn keeps it all together — it would make me nuts. I never subscribed but will now, knowing that it is vital to support all and the Weekly in these and all times. And thank you Bill for asking for that support.

-Winter

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Since the beginning of the pandemic-related shut downs, viewing visual art has been mostly limited to online offerings by major museums. But the Midpeninsula has some art galleries that are not only featuring virtual exhibits but slowly beginning to open in a physical space as well, such as Pamela Walsh Gallery in downtown Palo Alto. A commercial art gallery with the designation of a retail space, Walsh’s gallery reopened last month with a group show entitled “Seeking Nature” as well as a virtual exhibition featuring the works of the Spanish surrealist Salvador Dali.

Walsh, who is an art advisor as well as a gallery owner, is thankful that she was able to open her doors again.

“I am fortunate that my business provides a low-risk environment, so I have not had to make radical adjustments. Although I won’t be hosting any gatherings in the near future, people can visit the gallery safely and enjoy the art while maintaining a safe distance,” she said.

For her first show after reopening, Walsh decided to look at nature and invited six artists to participate with works focused on that central theme. Two of the artists, Craig Waddell and Don Scott MacDonald, are part of her gallery roster. The remaining four — Danielle Eubank, Zoya Frolova, Pierre Marie Brisson and Fernando Reyes — were familiar to her as a result of networking with other galleries and art fairs. “I wanted to curate a world-class exhibition featuring artists from many places who each feel a deep connection to the earth. The subject matter is fairly similar (light, water, land, plants) but the artists’ expressions of them are all unique,” she explained.

With its high ceilings and abundant natural lighting, the Ramona Street gallery space is perfect for art of all sizes and media, and many pieces in this show are quite large. Waddell’s thickly painted, abundantly floral still lifes seem to glow in this setting. His impasto approach to applying paint seems almost sculptural, even as it adheres to canvas. Although flowers are Waddell’s main subject matter, Walsh has also included a rare seascape by the Australian artist. “I can hear your whispers from across the sea” is a dramatic evocation of water meeting land, thanks to the thick, almost gestural application of paint and the cool palette. Water is also the subject matter of Frolova, who also happens to be a competitive swimmer. In “Following Light,” the artist has depicted an ocean that seems to end at the side of the canvas, much like an infinity pool. A tiny origami boat floats along enigmatically under the eyes of a hazy sun. It’s mysterious and yet, somehow, calming.

Water is also the theme for Eubank, who undertook a project to paint every ocean on Earth in order to raise awareness about climate change. It took 20 years and was completed in 2019 after a visit to Antarctica. Walsh explained that the artist “claims every ocean is different.” In “Arctic VI,” rolling waves are painted in cool shades of green and blue, against a white background. Compare it with “Phoenician Reflection II,” with its warm hues of gold and brown and one can, physically, feel the temperature change.

“Putting together a show is a multi-faceted process of relationship-building, logistics management and curation,” Walsh said. “It is one thing to pick great artists and art but another to put all of it in a gallery and create a dialogue that allows each work to sing.”

Walsh has managed to do just that, combining disparate artists who work in wildly different styles — somehow, it all works well aesthetically. Consider, for example, both the sinewy realism of Reyers’ trees as they reach for the sky, as well as the cool minimalism of MacDonald’s landscapes. Finally, for those who appreciate the creatures of land and sea, Brisson’s lovely batik-like evocations of birds and fish might be just the ticket. These mixed-media works will find you looking closely to ascertain just how the artist achieved such a feeling of tactility.

For those who are not ready to venture out yet, Walsh has organized a virtual exhibition of works by an art world icon, Salvador Dali. The title “Surreal Art for Surreal Times” says it all — and seems most appropriate in the current situation. Walsh explained that the prints belong to a collection owned by a dear friend, Michael Schwartz, who owns Galerie Michael in Beverly Hills. She explained, “The word ‘surrealist’ — or ‘beyond reality’ — was coined by French poet Guillaume Apollinaire at the beginning of the 20th century. The confluence of the physical world and the dream world was starting to feel like our new reality.”

The lithographs and engravings in the exhibition convey the well-known dream (or nightmare) tropes: skulls, anthropomorphic figures and distorted faces. Be sure to take the short audio tour, written and narrated by Walsh, who has a familiarity with Dali that only many years in the art world could achieve. Walsh said that she plans to continue virtual programming with future exhibitions of work by Picasso and Rembrandt.

Walsh reports that, although foot traffic in Palo Alto has been sparse, the response to an open gallery has been fantastic.

“There is no replacement for seeing art in person; there is an energy exchange that occurs when you are face to face with a work of art that is powerful and transformative,” she said. “Art helps us to connect to our human experience, and my gallery provides a space for that.”

More information is available at pamelawalshgallery.com. Freelance writer Sheryl Nonnenberg can be reached at nonnenberg@aol.com. This story originally appeared on thesixfifty.com.

Pamela Walsh Gallery finds a new footing by featuring live and virtual art experiences for every taste

by Sheryl Nonnenberg

Salvador Dalí’s “Spectacles” is featured in “Surreal Art for Surreal Times,” a virtual exhibition of works by the surrealist painter presented by the Pamela Walsh Gallery.
768 GREER ROAD, PALO ALTO

Intrinsic Charm and a Great Location

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中文諮詢請聯繫Audrey Sun, DRE #01933274 電話: 650.785.5822 | www.deleonrealty.com | DeLeon Realty, Inc. | DRE #01903224
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n other could move swiftly and effectively impede Megan Zhang’s work as a freelance journalist and host of “Travelogue,” an international travel show, than a global pandemic. “Throughout this whole pandemic, I’ve definitely felt very lost and uncertain,” Zhang said in an interview with the Palo Alto Weekly. “The future kind of looks blank, almost like a white page.” Still, it hasn’t stopped Zhang’s passion for telling other people’s stories. Since April, a month after her father passed away, she has collected stories of people from almost all over the world — China, England, the Czech Republic and Jordan, to name a few — and cities across the U.S. and shares them on her new website, TalkingThroughWalls.com.

In brief articles, she gives insight into the lives of a student, a teacher, a musician, a hotel owner even a Florida resident who drops to her knees to recover from her coronavirus. She also wears costume and gallops around her neighborhood to spread joy during times of social distancing. “No project this winter is the same, but they all serve a similar purpose.”

“I just thought, maybe by bringing these stories to the surface, it might help people feel a little more connected or hopeful,” Zhang said. “It’s been just a bit of a reminder that this fight is everybody’s, and there are so many people trying to make a difference.”

In Detroit, for example, Asha Shahjahan, a medical director turned COVID-19 unit physician, told Zhang about the emotional toll of working five consecutive nights of 12-hour shifts, constantly treating infected patients. “It’s been just an amazing reminder of how much resilience and resourcefulness and strength is out there,” Zhang said. Megan Zhang was born in Memphis, Tennessee, but moved through five different states and two different countries before her parents settled in what is out there,” Zhang said. “It’s just an amazing reminder of how much resilience and resourcefulness and strength is out there,” Zhang said.

When it comes to housing, he believes the city needs to incentivize construction of both market-rate and below-market-rate units, particularly around prominent corridors such as El Camino Real and Page Mill Road. Focusing exclusively on below-market-rate units is a recipe for getting no units at all, he said, because of the difficult economics of building affordable housing.

School (continued from page 7)

compliance with all state and locally required regulations in order to show that they are ready to open safely,” the agreements state. When schools can reopen, certain norms will be dedicated to teaching virtually students who don’t choose to go back to their campuses. In assigning those teachers not on campus, the district will take into account “the efficacy of the distance learning program” and whether teachers fall in high-risk groups or live with or care for at-risk groups.

If schools reopen and are again required to close, the schools will revert to their all-online distance-learning schedules.

The agreements also detail how the district will protect teachers from the spread of the coronavirus when in-person instruction resumes, including by providing sufficient masks, face shields and Plexiglas shields or three-sided cubbies for work that requires being closer than the recommended 6 feet; and establishing a dedicated discretionary fund for the superintendent to “quickly address safety issues arising after reopening.” At the elementary level, third-through fifth-graders will be required to wear masks in classrooms and students of all ages will must wear them in any area outside the classroom except when eating, drinking or engaging in physical activity). The district and union continue to negotiate mask requirements for younger students, with the union proposing that transgender students who identify as females can wear masks on campus. Any teacher who is exposed to the coronavirus and required to quarantine will continue to be paid and not have any days subtracted from sick or personal leave as long as they can continue to teach remotely, the agreements state.

“We enter this year with clear common schedules, increased through GATE, which will be required to wear masks in classroom during the current traditional grades, daily attendance, and a well-trained staff,” Superintendent Don Austin said.

The district is continuing to negotiate special education conditions with the teachers union. Tentative agreements between both the teachers union and California School Employees Association are set to be ratified soon and bring the two sides closer together. For approval at its first regular meeting of the new school year on Aug. 25.

Using her journalism skills, and with the help of Zoom and her phone, Zhang has been able to seek out stories of resilience from all walks of life. In a small town in Slovenia, just by the northern Italian border, Tišćić told Zhang about her work on a historic stud farm, where the nearly five-century-old tradition of horse breeding has survived World War II — when American soldiers helped save thousands of horses on the farm from being potentially slaughtered by Nazi forces, and continues during the pandemic.

Each story shows how someone’s life was suddenly disrupted by the global health crisis and how they have learned to adapt to a fluid situation. For Zhang, it’s not only her passion project, but also her own source of hope. “It’s been just an amazing reminder of how much resilience and resourcefulness and strength is out there,” Zhang said.

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A preview of Palo Alto government meetings next week

CITY COUNCIL ... The council plans to consider amending the carbon neutrality plan for the city’s electric supply portfolio and its electric utility reserves management practices. The council also plans to review its zoning code to comply with latest state laws on construction of accessory dwelling units. The virtual meeting will begin at 6 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 17. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 362 027 238.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD ... The board plans to review a request from Castilleja to redevelop its campus and build a below-grade garage. It also plans to review a proposal to build a single-family residential development with 1,800 square feet of office space at 788 San Antonio Road. The virtual meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 20. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 953 679 7046.

CITY/SCHOOL LIAISON COMMITTEE ... The commission plans to discuss recent meetings of the City Council and the Board of Education and discuss bike safety. The virtual meeting will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 20. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 739 622 589.

PUBLIC ART COMMISSION ... The commission will discuss allocation of funds for a new sculpture on the California Avenue fountain and consider agenda topics for its September retreat. The virtual meetings will begin at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 20. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 986 540 4450.

Stuck at home, TV travel show continues to collect stories from around the world

Megan Zhang inspires readers through the lives of others coping through the pandemic

by Lloyd Lee

Varna also said she wants to see Palo Alto strive to be more diverse, by addressing what he calls the city’s “bad record with housing and policing.” One of his top priorities, if elected, would be to attract people with diverse viewpoints to Palo Alto, he said.

“We need to structurally reform our systems to ensure that people of all backgrounds belong here,” Varna said.

Varna’s decision to seek a seat means voters will get to choose from among 10 candidates for four seats in the November election. Council members Lydia Kuo and Greg Tanaka are each hoping for a fresh four-year term. Also running are former Mayor Pat Burt; attorney Rebecca Eisenberg; Planning and Transportation Commission member Lu Lauing; Human Relations Commission member Steven Lee; engineer and activist Raven Malone; teacher Greer Stone; and Planning and Transportation Commission Chair Carl Petleton.

Two incumbents are not standing for reelection: Mayor Adrian Fine has decided against seeking another term, while Councilwoman Liz Kniss will term out at the end of this year. Sarin provided a relatable or interesting story to share, and everyone is the protagonist of their own life story,” Zhang said. “So if there’s anyone out there who knows of someone who has a particularly inspiring, relatable or interesting story to share, I would love to hear it.”

Editorial Assistant Lloyd Lee can be emailed at lle@paweekly.com.

Employment

Software Engineer Sr. Software Engr. Sr. - Palo Alto CA & sites throughout US. Tech development & diverse activities. Assist in sales activities. Prep tech proposals; coordinate in RFPs/RFP responses. Req: MS or equiv. Comp. Sci. or related + 1 yr exp. & willing to travel regularly to sites in US. Email resume to: mj@orinong.com

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Masks

(continued from page 5)

first counties in the nation to take what Health Officer Dr. Sara Cody called "extreme measures" to control the spread of the coronavirus, requiring all residents to shelter at home and mandating nonessential businesses to shut down. But the county has also been among the last in the Bay Area to impose fines on those who violate health orders, trails behind San Mateo, Contra Costa, Marin and Napa counties (see sidebar).

County leaders at the meeting emphasized that reopening businesses, even using so-called "risk reduction" guidelines, carries a higher risk of spreading COVID-19. Between July 13 and Aug. 11, the number of confirmed cases in the county spiked from 7,557 to 12,962—an increase of more than a 70% in less than a month.

Adding to the sense of urgency, the state is now telling counties that they will face penalties for not cracking down on violators. California's 2020 Budget Act requires the state to conclude a report that shows they are enforcing public health orders in order to receive certain state funding. The warning comes at a time when the county is facing a deep deficit in excess of $300 million.

"I think the message pretty clearly is we have to come up with an enforcement mechanism in order to avoid losing revenue," County Executive Jeff Smith said.

The new rules

Under the county's ordinance, which takes effect immediately, the public health department can deputize peace officers, county employees and others to act as enforcement officers, empowered to impose civil penalties on individuals and businesses caught disobeying health orders.

Individuals will face fines between $25 and $500, depending on the circumstances and number of violations. Businesses will face between $250 and $5,000 in fines. Businesses under investigation could be subject to review by county employees, including environmental health inspectors, which will include on-site observations and documentation similar to food facility inspections.

Up until now, the county has taken a somewhat cumbersome approach to enforcing the public health orders, routing reports and complaints through the District Attorney's Office as a mistake-mater criminal matter. That approach has led to some citations and to more consistent enforcement of the rules must come first, being decided on a case-by-case basis.

Civil penalties are far more flexible and less punitive and will lead to more consistent enforcement of violations as businesses reopen, County Counsel James Williams said at the Aug. 11 meeting.

It’s not overwhelming numbers. But there are those businesses and individuals who don’t believe that they need to be following health orders," Williams said. "It’s important for all of the many, many businesses who are very carefully and thoughtfully adhering strictly to the social-distancing protocols and risk-reduction protocols."

Complaints about scofflaws

L eading medical experts in the region have repeatedly emerged to say it's a bad idea to wear a mask in public areas and to practice social distancing and good hygiene techniques as a way to protect the community from the coronavirus, requiring all businesses to do so.

"By wearing a mask, you are protecting others," Adams said. "If we all take these simple steps, we will flatten the curve once and for all.

Even though a small minority may be ignoring the health directives, it’s adding up. County staff say they have received a "significant amount" of complaints. In Mountain View, for example, the city had received 441 complaints as of Monday. Of these cases, 172 led to either a warning or a police investigation documenting the purported violation, while nine have been subject to criminal investigation. The process of proving a violation could be subject to review by a neutral dispute officer at the District Attorney's Office.

$250 and $500 under an ordinance passed on Tuesday.

The Mountain View Police Department will continue to walk the line between education and enforcement under the county’s new ordinance, she said.

"We will continue to be responsive to calls and complaints we receive, while continuing to educate and inform, request compliance and enforce through citations, when necessary," Nelson said.

A key difference between Santa Clara County’s ordinance and the enforcement measures across the rest of the Bay Area is a “grace period” provision allowing violators a second chance to fix the problem before getting hit with a fine. In the majority of cases, Williams said, the default option will be for enforcement officers to give people and businesses a 24- to 72-hour window to comply before handing out a ticket.

Even with the softer touch, some residents raised concerns to the Board of Supervisors that fines should have come earlier, saying they don’t understand the situation. "It's taking too long to get in control of COVID," said Adela Alvarado, a Palo Alto resident who runs a preschool in Mountain View. "And I feel like there’s still a pocket of the population that still doesn’t understand the situation.”

If anything, the ordinance on fines should have come earlier, she said.

But some business owners, many of whom are willing to comply with the health orders and support the new ordinance, say they are concerned over how hard the county will crack down, particularly when it comes to violations by customers. If some residents are already confused about when and where it’s acceptable not to wear a mask outside, then businesses — already subject to an exhaustive list of specific directives — are even more fallible to small errors.

San Mateo County is fining the maskless

C ompared to San Mateo County, most residents and business owners who spoke with this news organization agreed that, five months into the pandemic with no end in sight, enforcing fines is a move the county must take in order to slow the spread of the virus.

"It's taking too long to get in control of COVID," said Adela Alvarado, a Palo Alto resident who runs a preschool in Mountain View. "And I feel like there’s still a pocket of the population that still doesn’t understand the situation." If anything, the ordinance on fines should have come earlier, she said.

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Nearly five months into the coronavirus pandemic and the number of new COVID-19 cases in Palo Alto is rising sharply after almost completely plateauing in May, according to Santa Clara County data.

In the five weeks between mid-May and late June, just nine new cases were reported — resulting in 86 cumulative cases as of June 23. In the six weeks since then, however, no fewer than eight residents per week, and in most weeks many more, have contracted the virus.

The city’s COVID-19 cases totaled 183 as of Aug. 9 — including 20 new ones in the prior week alone. That’s a rate of 273 cases per 100,000 residents, or 0.27% of the city’s population.

While the county’s coronavirus dashboard does not show the numbers of Palo Alto residents who have been hospitalized, countywide data reveals hospitalizations for COVID-19 have been on the rise: Daily counts of patients in hospital and non-ICU beds were high in March and April, decreased to lows in late May and early June, and then began rising again. They now approach the March and April numbers again.

It’s unclear why case numbers in Palo Alto are increasing. Asked for an explanation, the spokesperson for the county’s Emergency Operations Center had no idea.

Palo Alto’s cases started rising in the third week of June, according to county data, a few weeks after the county released its stay-at-home order as of June 5. Testing also ramped up in June, although Dr. Sara Cody, the county’s health officer, said at the time that testing alone did not account for the surge in numbers.

She also pointed to hospitalizations as an indicator of the true incidence increase.

The rise in Palo Alto’s cases doesn’t appear tied to an outbreak in any congregate care facilities, such as skilled nursing homes. The California Department of Public Health monitors skilled nursing facility COVID-19 cases, and all in Palo Alto had either none or fewer than 11 among its residents. Webster House, Channing House, Palo Alto Sub-Acute and Rehabilitation Center, and VITA/Palo Alto each have fewer than 11 residents who’ve tested positive.

Cases among nursing home staff, who presumably aren’t counted in Palo Alto’s COVID-19 totals, are another story: As of Aug. 7, Palo Alto Sub-Acute in downtown Palo Alto reported having 14 cases among staff, the state database showed. How is the virus being spread? Countywide, nearly two-thirds of new cases are thought to be community-transmitted, according to the county Public Health Department’s COVID-19 dashboard, meaning that the person didn’t contract the virus from someone known to them who had COVID-19.

Cody pointed last week to two concerning trends countywide: an increase in cases among Latino individuals and a steady rise in cases in counties as people ages 35 and younger. Among adults, the 20-to-39 age group comprises 38.4% of those who have tested positive for the virus, according to county data. Cases among Latino individuals have skyrocketed to 52.2%, while they make up 25.8% of the county’s population.

Within Palo Alto, cases have not been evenly distributed, according to ZIP code data from the state’s California Reportable Disease Information Exchange (CalRedi) reporting system and the county. As of Aug. 9, ZIP code 94301 in north Palo Alto has had 60 cases among 17,191 residents (an equivalent of 349 cases per 100,000 people). ZIP code 94306, which encompasses mid-Palo Alto, has had 65 cases among 27,549 residents (or a rate of 236 cases per 100,000 people). Meanwhile, 94304, which includes west Palo Alto and a bit of north Palo Alto, has had 21 cases among its 3,982 residents (for a rate of 538 cases per 100,000).

The county and the state health departments do not include a specific case total for Palo Alto’s portion of the 94303, which it shares with East Palo Alto.

The higher case numbers in certain ZIP codes could be due in part to the long-term care facilities and apartment buildings in those areas, where the risks of the virus spreading can be greater.

Peter Katz, president and CEO of Mountain View Chamber of Commerce, said the county’s enforcement rules have been trying to do everything they can to adhere to at least the spirit of the law, if not the letter of it. He said the lack of clarity in the county’s rules could be a big problem for businesses trying to obey.

“Fining businesses for rules that they don’t even know they should adhere to or they weren’t clear on is not moving in the right direction,” Katz said.

The grace period built into the county’s enforcement ordinance does add some leniency, Katz said, but he does not always be enough for businesses.

Some residents and businesses, who already find the current stay-at-home and mask mandates too restrictive, may oppose the enforcement, likely deeming it an overstepping of the government’s boundaries and a highly impractical rule to enforce.

Barry Katz, a Palo Alto resident who recently wrote an op-ed in the Weekly encouraging use of face coverings, said he would point to the number of deaths in response to those who feel the enforcement is unnecessary.

“It’s not as if somebody gains power over somebody else in virtue of this ordinance,” he said. “Nobody wins.”

Mountain View Mayor Marga ret Ahe-Koga said she believes the county’s fines make sense, if only to stay in step with neighboring counties’ impositions of similar penalties.

“I believe in consistency with all this — I don’t think it helps when one county does something and another county next door doesn’t, I think we all need to be aligned,” she said.

Fines for hospitals?

Passage of the enforcement ordinance Tuesday was not a guaranteed outcome; in fact, a debate among supervisors over whether fine hospitals who fail to perform COVID-19 testing threats threatened the ordinance’s adoption.

Under the county’s public health rules, all large health care systems in Santa Clara County must provide tests to patients at heightened risk of contracting the coronavirus. Hospitals risk getting hit with civil fines if they cannot provide tests to patients with COVID-19 symptoms; patients who had close contact with people who tested positive for COVID-19, and all patients at “higher risk” of exposure because of the nature of their job or recent high-risk activities.

Hospital staff from Stanford Health Care and Kaiser Permanente, joined by representatives from local physician groups, said the ordinance would punish them for failing to meet an unattainable goal. Testing equipment is in short supply and is a problem totally out of the control of local hospitals, and the county’s demand that such a large group of patients gets tested threatens to take away COVID-19 testing from the most vulnerable groups.

“Penalizing their efforts, when many factors are not in their control, is counter productive,” said Dr. Cindy Russell, president of the Santa Clara County Medical Association, in a letter to supervisors. “Your reconsideration of the dire consequences of your testing order are essential for ensuring that health care of our community does not come to a halt.”

Supervisor Dave Cortese said he was uneasy passing new enforcement rules on hospitals without finding some way to determine whether hospitals are showing a “good faith” effort to meet the county’s testing requirements, which could be used as proof to waive any penalties. The county should work with hospitals in the coming weeks to find out what that looks like, he said, and avoid having “unclear standards that could damage the county’s partnership with health care providers. “If we can’t agree with health care facilities on what the standard is for civil penalties, I don’t think we’re gonna get what we want,” Cortese said.

Supervisor Susan Ellenberg took a similar stance, saying she was not in favor of penalizing hospitals when there are other options to achieve more COVID-19 testing. At the very least, she said, there ought to be a memorandum of understanding between the county and health care providers that avoids punitive action.

“I’d like to use every last tool that we have before mandating something to our partners,” she said.

On the other side was Simnitan, who said hospitals have had months to figure out ways to boost testing capacity and should be expected — and applauded — for stepping up to the task. But hospitals are still apparently falling short.

“Frankly, I remain concerned that they may not be in full compliance,” Simnitan said.

In an attempt to gather the fourth-fifths vote required to pass the emergency ordinance Tuesday, Simnitan proposed the passage of the ordinance be contingent on negotiations between county staff and hospital leaders on the standards for enforcement, which could be later used to amend the ordinance.

The motion passed unanimously.

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The coronavirus case count in Palo Alto may actually be higher than the county is currently reporting. A recent and as-yet-unfixed glitch in the state’s CalRedi reporting system is likely underreporting the number of cases, and the state is working to remedy the problem, the county has noted.

Santa Clara County issued its stay-at-home order starting on March 17, it began lifting the order incrementally in early May. Since May 31, the county has followed state guidelines for reopening the economy. It relaxed its health order on June 5 only to end up on the state’s “watch list” twice in July. It partially rolled back the reopening on July 15 due to rising numbers of COVID-19-related hospitalizations.

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About the cover: Illustration by Douglas Young.
Youth

(continued from page 7)

fueled by a desire to express herself to backgrounds and perspectives that may differ from her own. She asked the other panelists what role she and other non-Black young adults should play in combating White supremacy.

“I think it’s important for our non-Black peers to speak up about things because when Black people do it, it’s often seen as over dramatic, an angry black person,” Miller said.

Lythcott-Haims echoed the same sentiment after a white audi
cience member asked her what Black students at Stanford, Palo Alto Unified principal, asked what he can do as a white man of privilege.

“We need you to step up, be courageous and dare to call stuff out — the jokes, the misinformation, the outright racism,” she said. “White people talking with white people is often the most likely to influence people like you, so we need you to take it on.”

Lythcott-Haims asked each of the panelists what advice she would give to the more than 200 people watching the Zoom panel. They urged people to get involved with local organizations, to make themselves and as volunteers, that support young people of color, including Youth United for Community Ac
cion in East Palo Alto, One East Palo Alto and the Big Homie Proj
cct, which connects local Black youth with Black mentors in their tax-credit community. They urged them to get civically engaged — to run for school board or participate in school board meetings and to vote, particularly young people.

They also urged support for Black businesses.

Ganese called on others, par
ticularly non-Black people of color, to engage in what might be uncon
temporary conversations about race within their own communities and to “not listen but listen and respond to.”

For Goodwin, the seed for ac
tion was planted in her 9 years old. It was 2009, and she remembered watching protests break out in Oakland after Oscar Grant was killed by a police officer.

“At that moment I knew and I began to understand … this may or may not be me one day,” she said.

“I have four older brothers. Seeing a man who looks like my brothers break out in Oakland after Oscar Grant was killed, I was absolutely made uncomfortable, the only thing that I could do is try and change how things are,” she said.

Evelyn Elderson Kadwany can be emailed at ekadwayne@ paweekly.com.
With the exemption still in effect, the 340 Portage Ave. building, as well as adjoining areas at 3200 Park Blvd. and on Olive Avenue, can continue to be used for retail, storage and research and development. The city’s code also requires, however, that these uses are permitted in “approximately the same ratio” of uses existing in October 2006. Under this restriction, the retail component of the 90,000-square-foot building cannot exceed 60,000 square feet.

The property owner, The Sobrato Organization, is now requesting to be free of that ratio restriction—a zoning change that, if granted by the city, would allow any hopes that a significant housing project would be built there in the foreseeable future.

The trigger for the request is Target’s proposal to set up a 30,000-square-foot store in the 340 Portage building. Tim Steele, 30,000-square-foot store in the north Ventura area. If the building at 340 Portage were to continue as offices and retail, residential buildings can be built on the south side of the property and a parking structure on the north side, Steele wrote.

“We strongly believe that this zoning code amendment will achieve multiple city objectives, including the preservation of this historic structure while still allowing for a significant amount of future housing,” Steele wrote.

“This includes the preservation and utilization of at least 30,000 square feet of community serving retail space—something that is significant in the current economic environment.”

Housing, anyone?

While Sobrato has resisted building housing at 340 Portage, neighborhood residents Terry Holzemer and Becky Sanders and Parks and Recreation Commissioner Keith Reckdahl are pitching another alternative: having the city buy the site and build hundreds of units of housing. Holzemer and Reckdahl, members of the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan working group, and Sanders, moderator of the Ventura Neighborhood and Apartment, have proposed preserving the Fry’s building but converting it into multifamily housing.

Under their proposal, the city would build about 400 below-market-rate housing units for teachers, seniors and people with disabilities as well as 770 other housing units. This would be accomplished by converting both the Fry’s building and a newer office building at 3250 Park Blvd. to housing, as well as constructing several smaller apartment buildings along Park, between Olive and Lambert avenues. The plan also calls for converting the small office building at 3201-3205 Ash St. to a community center.

The city would finance the purchase through 30-year municipal bonds, which will be repaid through tenant rents and by revenues from a business tax that the city is looking to adopt (the council in March halted its effort to place the business tax in November ballot because of the economic shutdown, but the tax could make an appearance on the 2022 ballot).

In presenting the proposal, the trio cited the city’s history of allowing high-tech firms to replace local retail space and community-serving offices such as health providers. These tech tenants, the proposal states, “increase peak-hour traffic, price out local businesses” and force neighborhood residents to go farther to shop, dine and receive professional services.

“We propose to end this trend by converting the zoning along El Camino and other streets in Ventura to allow only housing and local service businesses,” the proposal states. “This will benefit residents, open up new housing opportunities, and benefit many small local firms priced out of our community.”

Unlike Sobrato’s proposal, the trio’s plan would prohibit offices at the Fry’s building.

“With Fry’s now gone, we think it’s the time the site became housing, just as the city’s zoning and housing inventory intended,” Holzemer, Reckdahl and Sanders wrote in the proposal.

Despite the city’s historical yearning for housing at the site, Palo Alto is unlikely to go along with the plan. The council passed a budget in June that cuts expenses by $40 million and, as the city’s recent abandonment of renovation plans for Cubberley Community Center demonstrates, city staff and council members have little appetite for new infrastructure projects or big-ticket purchases.

Even though the city has traditionally opposed —and banned—big-box stores, numerous Ventura residents said at the July 28 meeting of the working group that they would support having a mix of retail operations at the Fry’s building that combines neighborhood services and a small Target.

Kirsten Flynn, a Ventura resident and member of the working group, said that she would endorse continued commercial activities at the site but would like a “good fair-safe” that the space intended for retail doesn’t get converted to offices.

While residents continue to cite below-market-rate housing as a top priority for the North Ventura plan, many have grown hesitant to replace the Fry’s building, which was constructed more than 80 years ago by Thomas Poon Chew and used as a cannery until 1949. Some, including Holzemer, have advocated for retaining the Fry’s building and commemorating it as an important part of local, state and national history.

Others, including Flynn, said they are open to the redevelopment of some portions of the Fry’s building to facilitate housing but would like most of the old cannery property to be preserved. Pittman said they would support having a mix of retail, which could include a Target, at the site.

Lakha Pittman, an Olive Avenue resident and working group member, expressed a similar sentiment. A Target “could add some excitement” to the neighborhood, she said during the July 28 discussion.

“I don’t want to put down Fry’s in any way, but at least it was a store that people could go to for some things,” Pittman said. “I didn’t think it would be missed, but it kind of is missed, so I think having a store—not just a little, itty-bitty store, but a small Target—would be good for the area.”

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Mayor will not seek reelection
Palo Alto Mayor Adrian Fine, a staunch housing advocate who has frequently clashed with his City Council colleagues on issues pertaining to growth, will not seek another council term.

Fine, a former member of the Planning and Transportation Commission whose mayoral term coincided with one of the most turbulent years in Palo Alto’s recent history, told the Weekly on Aug. 6 that he will not seek re-election. His decision not to run meant that the Aug. 7 deadline for filing candidacy papers was extended Aug. 12.

Fine’s decision means that voters will choose between 10 candidates vying for four seats. Incumbent council members Lydia Kou and Greg Tanaka are both seeking new four-year terms, while Councilwoman Liz Kniss is terming out this year. Joining Kou and Tanaka on the ballot will be former Mayor Pat Burt, planning commissioners Cari Templeton and Ed Lauing, attorney Rebecca Eisenberg, teacher Greer Stone, Human Relations Commissioner Steven Lee, activist Raven Malone and businessman Ajit Varma.

Fine said his decision not to seek a new term was based on both personal and political factors. The main reason has to do with family. He and his wife, Jane, are expecting their first child in October, he said.

At the same time, Fine said that he has concerns about the direction in which Palo Alto is going. The city, he said, has become more “inward focused” and less concerned about diversity and inclusiveness. He said he doesn’t see a future for growing a young family in Palo Alto and he does not believe the community is prepared to take serious action on equity, inclusion and affordability.

City extends Summer Streets program
Seeking to provide a lifeline to struggling businesses and further enhance the city’s nascent outdoor dining program, Palo Alto agreed on Monday to keep University and California avenues closed to cars until at least the end of the year.

The council voted unanimously to keep its Summer Streets program until the end of this year and to allow restaurants that build parklets to support outdoor dining to keep the structures in place until at least Labor Day of 2021. In addition, the council asked staff to consider creating a “COVID surcharge” that restaurants and retailers can tack on to their bills and formulate a plan for dealing with an expected rise in vacancies. This could include expanding the menu of permitted uses at retail locations.

The council’s decision was prompted by overwhelming support from residents and patrons for the outdoor dining program, which made its debut on California Avenue in June and which premiered on University Avenue in early July. In a city survey of about 200 residents and diners, about 95% reported that they felt “comfortable and safe” while dining in the two commercial districts and 77% said they would like to see the program extended.

“The experiment of street closures and pedestrian zones may not be perfect and there are respected business leaders who are strongly in opposition to the closure, of University at least,” Judy Kleinberg, president of the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce, said. “But so far, we haven’t heard any better strategy and the city and resident-created surveys both seem to reinforce the residents’ enthusiasm for the program.”

Armed men rob Midtown 7-Eleven
Police are searching for two suspects in the armed robbery of a convenience store in Midtown Palo Alto on Friday, Aug. 7.

The clerk of a 7-Eleven store at 708 Colorado Ave. told police that the suspects entered the store shortly after 11 p.m., pointed handguns at him and forced him to open the cash register. After the clerk complied, the suspects removed cash from the register, stole several packs of cigarettes and fled in a dark-colored SUV east on Colorado Avenue.

No one was injured and the suspects were still at-large as of Aug. 13. A second employee was also in the store, but there were no customers at the time of the robbery.

The suspects are described as white or Hispanic males between 20 and 25 years old. Both were wearing face coverings, black jackets and jeans. One suspect carried a silver handgun; the other carried a black handgun.

The store was previously robbed in April 2019. Police have not identified the suspect in that case, and have made no arrests.

Anyone with information about this incident is asked to call the department’s 24-hour dispatch center at 650-329-2413. Anonymous tips can be emailed to paloalto@tipnow.org or sent by text message or voicemail to 650-383-8984.
Across
1 Band that’s the theme of this puzzle
6 “Heroz4hire” rapper ___ the Damaja
10 Slasher flick props
14 “… quack quack there, ___ quack …”
15 Actor Arkin
16 “99 Luftballons” singer
18 Hollywood cross street
19 He was a real Dick on “NewsRadio”
20 1-Across guitarist and vocalist
23 Summer month, for short
24 Speaks like a heavy smoker
26 Shop class tool
29 Cry convulsively
31 Letters on a Cardinals hat
32 “Bali ___” (“South Pacific” song)
34 1-Across and The Dude of Life album released in 1994
38 “Hell’s Half ___” (1954 movie)
39 Velvet Underground vocalist Reed
40 Singers lower than sopranis
41 1-Across predecessors and mentors
46 Jazz band’s song list
47 They takeeth away on Apr. 15
48 ___ Fighters (Dave Grohl band)
49 Org. that gives out 9-digit IDs
50 Sends to hell
52 Sound from a lamb
54 1-Across keyboardist who started as a fan
61 Cheat, in a way
63 Cleopatra’s river
64 “___ White Swan” (T. Rex song)
66 The last word in sermons?
69 Elevator, to Elvis Costello
70 European compilation album for 1-Across

Down
1 ___ Farm (bygone clothing line)
2 Mister, in Munich
3 Powerful and pleasing, to a Rasta
4 “Later”
5 Is of practical value
6 Coffeehouse quaff
7 Yale students, familiarly
8 Blow a gasket
9 Dig up
10 “Henry and June” diarist Nin
11 They adore strange things
12 Jim Morrison song, with “The”
13 “___ Anything” (John Cusack movie)
21 Gps. like CARE and Amnesty International
22 Word after bake or garage
25 Ubiquitous December mall guys
26 Sings like Kurt Elling
27 Like an angry cat’s back
28 Spied via the telephone
30 Neckwear for Frankenstein’s monster?
31 Nondescript category
32 “___ bad, bad thing”
33 1000 K
34 Friend’s opposite
37 “Spy vs. Spy” magazine
42 Decoder’s wear?
43 “Your ___” (Morrissey album)
44 Man, in Mantua
45 Cars given while yours is in the shop, e.g.
51 Sandwich spreads
53 “We love to fly ___ shows” (Delta slogan)
55 “Rent” character
56 F or G, on sheet music
57 It’s worth next to nothing
58 Old Icelandic saga
59 “What ___ Beneath”
60 Remini of “The King of Queens”
61 Corn remnants
62 Raw metal source

Answers on page 31.
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