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City opens first ‘safe parking’ site for unhoused residents

Palo Alto follows in footsteps of East Palo Alto, Mountain View

by Gennady Sheyner

After years of discussion and a few false starts, Palo Alto on Feb. 19 opened its first “safe parking” site east of U.S. Highway 101 in response to the steady increase in residents living in vehicles on local streets.

Located at 2000 Geng Road, near the Baylands Athletic Center, the lot can accommodate 12 vehicles and includes a building with a shower. The property was recently used by the Palo Alto Fire Department while the city’s Rinconada Park fire station was under reconstruction.

In launching the program, Palo Alto follows in the footsteps of East Palo Alto and Mountain View, both of which host parking lots for people who live in their cars.

The nonprofit Move Mountain View, which oversees five “safe parking” sites in Mountain View, will operate the Palo Alto lot, with Santa Clara County providing the funding. The Palo Alto City Council approved the partnership in September, when it unanimously agreed to lease the 25,000-square-foot lot to the county.

In addition to providing a secure, 24-hour place to park, the program will offer case management and other social services. At its Mountain View lots, Move Mountain View has offered residents regular COVID-19 testing and a food pantry.

The program was first proposed in 2019 by council member Lydia Kou and Mayor Tom DuBois, who submitted a memo urging their colleagues to identify city sites that could be repurposed for safe parking. While the memo focused... (continued on page 30)

EDUCATION

COVID-19 tests await students

District looks to partner with new company for regular testing

by Elena Kadvany

With Palo Alto Unified gearing up to bring more students and teachers back to campuses this spring, district leadership is looking to expand COVID-19 testing to include any students, teachers and staff members, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic.

Staff are recommending that all students, faculty and staff who are regularly on campus participate in diagnostic and surveillance screening on a “regular cadence” starting the week of March 1. All employees working in-person will be required to get tested at least every other week and within five days of returning from out-of-town travel. All students in grades K-5 attending school in person will be encouraged to get tested at the same frequency. Secondary students on campuses will be advised to get tested on a weekly basis.

“Though the evidence continues to evolve, we have learned from examples of what works and what does not work since reopening schools. We believe expanding testing will position PAUSD to further reduce the chances of transmission on our campuses,” a staff report states.

The school board briefly discussed the plan Tuesday; it will come back for formal action at a future meeting.

The Santa Clara County Public Health Department has no recommendation for student testing but... (continued on page 31)

TECHNOLOGY

Adoption of license plate readers stirs anxieties over privacy

City of Palo Alto would keep license plate images for 96 hours — or five years

by Gennady Sheyner

Palo Alto’s newest tool for parking management is expected to save money, provide data and help the city understand — and resolve — tensions between local employees and residents in neighborhoods next to commercial districts.

But some of these same residents also believe that the city’s new automated license plate readers will threaten their privacy and inadvertently worsen the very problem that the city is trying to alleviate: the number of employees who park their vehicles in residential areas, which was high before the COVID-19 pandemic and which is expected to return once the health crisis subsides.

The City Council tried to balance these two priorities — managing parking and managing privacy — on Monday night when it unanimously approved spending $140,000 to buy and install two automated license plate readers. The cameras, which will be attached to parking-enforcement vehicles, will be rolled out in the city’s Residential Preferential Parking districts and potentially implemented at a later date in public garages and lots.

The city has been considering the technology since at least 2017, when a report by the city’s consultant, Dixon Resources, recommended it as part of a broader plan to manage parking throughout the city, along with parking meters and new mobile apps to help visitors pay for spots. Duncan Solutions is the vendor of the technology.

Chief Transportation Official Philip Kamhi said the license-plate reader program will bring... (continued on page 31)
**PUBLIC NOTICE** - In accordance with Sec.106 of the Programmatic Agreement, T-Mobile West, LLC plans to upgrade an existing telecommunications facility at 345 Hamilton Avenue Palo Alto, CA 94301. Please direct comments to Gavin L. at 818-898-4866 regarding site SF04533A.

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**EVERYTHING IS GUINEA BE OK**

A family of four was distraught to hear that their three female guinea pigs didn’t survive a Feb. 18 fire in their detached garage. The family’s devastation was visible to Palo Alto firefighter-paramedic Greg Coffelt, who responded to the 5 a.m. blaze at a three-apartment complex on Seale Avenue.

“The guinea pigs were something that they really showed affection and love for,” he said. Coffelt went out of his way to purchase a new guinea pig that same day, providing much-needed joy to the family’s two children: 6-year-old Hayden and 4-year-old Teddy. With permission from their father, Coffelt and his crew teamed up to purchase the new brown-and-black pet rodent at a local Petco store. They then made their way back to Seale Avenue on their fire engine.

“When we showed up back at the house, we rang the bell on the front of the engine and the kids were ‘kind of surprised and inquisitive.’ The children’s faces immediately lit up when they were presented with their new pet, whom they named Candy Bear. “It was a really good feeling to be able to give back to them and turn their day around because not only did they have a bad day, but if I was in their shoes, I would remember getting a little gift like this from the fire department,” Coffelt said.

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**POWERFUL INVESTMENT**

Acterra was one of 11 organizations awarded with a community outreach grant from Peninsula Clean Energy, which announced the recipients in a Feb. 22 press release. The Palo Alto-based nonprofit plans to spend the funds on conducting virtual electric induction cooking demonstrations, distributing information on building electrification to the public and online workshops and other work to educate first-time electric car buyers.

A total of $316,440 in grants ranging between $15,000 and $40,000 were divided among the recipients for numerous efforts, including electrification; income-qualified power bill discounts and programs; electric vehicle rebates; and home energy assistance. “These grants will especially help residents in East Palo Alto and elsewhere in the county who have not only faced the harshest impacts of this pandemic but historically have not had the same access to clean, affordable and reliable resources as wealthier communities,” East Palo Alto Mayor Carlos Romero said in a statement.

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**QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

“I think it’s safe to say there’s no safe harbor.”

Palo Alto prepares for more budget cuts amid prolonged revenue slump

As economic crisis continues to hit hotels, City Council looks for other ways to reduce costs

by Gennady Sheyner

When Palo Alto’s elected leaders agreed last June to cut back on expenses from the city’s budget, they were operating on the assumption that the worst of the pandemic would be over by December.

Now, as the City Council is looking toward the next year’s budget and COVID-19 continues to cast a dark cloud over the local economy, those seemingly dire projections have proven to be optimistic. With revenues falling beneath expectations, the council is preparing to cut the budget by another $7 million, a move that will likely include additional service cuts and delays on numerous infrastructure projects.

The debate over which programs to cut and which projects to delay will take center stage next Monday, when the council considers a series of budget adjustments and weighs further strategies for supporting businesses and nonprofit groups. As part of the discussion, the council will consider waiving rent for the tenants who lease space at city-owned properties and spending about $150,000 to modify the streetscape at University Avenue so that the city can more easily open and close the road to traffic to support local businesses.

One significant action that the council plans to take on Monday is to formally eliminate the 83 full-time positions and 107 part-time positions that were frozen and defunded when the council adopted the fiscal year 2021 budget last June. The eliminated positions make up 18% of the city’s workforce, according to a new report from the Administrative Services Department.

Further staff cuts may follow in the months ahead. During a Feb. 8 discussion of Palo Alto’s long-term financial forecast, council members acknowledged that the city will need to identify additional expense reductions, whether in services, infrastructure projects or both.

“I think it’s safe to say there’s no safe harbor, so to speak,” Chief Financial Officer Kiely Nose said during the Feb. 8 discussion. “We’ll have to look across the organization.”

Given the bleak financial outlook, the council agreed at that meeting that one of its strategies should be slowing down infrastructure spending. Vice Mayor Put Burt was among those who pushed for the council to reconsider the city’s capital projects.

“We need to look objectively on how aggressive a capital plan we can have during this economic crisis and whether all these things need to be continued at a record pace in the middle of an emergency,” Burt said at the Feb. 8 discussion.

On Monday, members will have a chance to identify specific projects that could be delayed or canceled. According to staff, the list that the city is currently scheduled to approve before the end of June includes $8 million for the latest phase of the Charleston-Araratro德拉道路街道项目, which includes enhanced bike lanes, traffic signal improvements and landscaped median islands; $2.5 million for improvements at Rinconada Park, including new playground equipment and upgrades to irrigation and drainage; $2.4 million to help renovate the Palo Alto Junior Museum and Zoo; $2.7 million for new automated parking-guidance systems at downtown garages; and $87.7 million for the replacement of the aging mechanical, electrical and lighting systems at the Municipal Services Center.

The city also plans to approve a $950,000 design contract for the replacement of Fire Station 4 at Mitchell Park. The current station, which was constructed in 1953, has been deemed seismically unsafe and insufficient in size to provide space for emergency supplies and to separate living quarters from furnaces of engines. A report from the city’s 2011 Infrastructure Blue Ribbon Committee also noted that the station can “barely hold the two engines” given that equipment has grown in size and weight over the years.

Like other projects on the council’s 2014 list of infrastructure priorities, the replacement project was based on pending occupancy taxes for funding. But (continued on page 10)
12 months into the pandemic, ‘One year in’ series seeks readers’ perspectives

Weekly to publish reflections from local residents on how coronavirus has changed them and their lives

by Palo Alto Weekly staff

It’s been nearly a year since Bay Area public health leaders enacted the nation’s first stay-at-home order, the opening salvo in our prolonged battle against the new coronavirus. To mark the anniversary, the Palo Alto Weekly is preparing to publish a two-part series, “One year in,” that captures how the pandemic and the shutdown have affected local residents and their perspectives on life.

And as part of this reporting project, we’d like to hear from you, our readers. What’s your takeaway from this unprecedented year of isolation? What will the legacy of the pandemic be in how you live your life?

The health and economic impacts have rippled, and formed groups of people in divergent ways: Front-line hospital workers are increasingly exhausted, and some are angry, at the never-ending influx of patients; those who have been unemployed are facing mounting debt and fear the day they will slide into debt; others have volunteered to help others and, through doing so, experienced the world in new and different ways.

The Weekly’s “One year in” will publish in two parts starting next Friday. Our journalists are busy working with and photographing people from different walks of life, but we’d also like to include your contributions in this series. So what’s your story been during the pandemic? How are you different today than you were one year ago? We welcome your thoughts, whether brief or lengthy. Send us your perspective by emailing editor@paweekly.com or by leaving a three-minute voicemail message at 650-223-6514 by Wednesday, March 10. You’ll need to leave your contact information so we can get in touch with you.

To read the reflections now of one local resident, see this week’s guest opinion column on page 16, written by former Palo Alto Weekly staff writer Rachel Kellerman, who became a contact tracer last year.

TRANSPORTATION

State bill seeks to take politics out of VTA governance

Assemblyman Marc Berman’s proposal would abolish current practice of giving elected leaders oversight

by Gennady Sheyner

Responding to complaints about poor governance at the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority that have stretched over years, state Assemblyman Marc Berman has introduced a bill that would shift oversight of the agency away from politicians and toward appointed experts.

The proposal that Berman, D-Menlo Park, introduced on Feb. 18 would also reduce the number of voting members on the VTA board of directors from 12 to nine. Five of them would be appointed by Santa Clara County. The other four would be split between the city of San Jose, which would get two seats, and the other county cities, which would get the other two.

Of the two seats not controlled by San Jose, one would go to a resident of Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Mountain View, Milpitas, Palo Alto or Sunnyvale. The other seat would go to a resident of Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Gatos, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Santa Clara or Saratoga.

In introducing the legislation, known as Assembly Bill 1091, the former Palo Alto City Council member pointed to three separate civil grand jury reports over the past 20 years that have concluded that the VTA’s governance structure is “a root cause of the agency’s poor performance.”

The most recent of these, which came out in June 2019, concluded that the VTA board suffers from a lack of experience and, in many cases, engagement by some directors. The grand jury also found that the board is dominated “in terms of numbers, seniority and influence” by representatives of Santa Clara County and San Jose and that there is “frequent tension” between board members’ fiduciary duties to the VTA and the political demands of their local elected positions.

The grand jury also concluded that under the current system, appointees to the VTA board “often lack a basic understanding of VTA’s operations and transportation issues, generally.”

Berman’s proposed legislation seeks to remove some of the politics from the transportation agency by replacing elected directors with appointed representatives of the public.

Berman noted that the agency provides “essential public transit” and that under the current system, appointed directors have “limited understanding of the region’s complex transportation needs.”

The Weekly’s “One year in” will publish in two parts starting next Friday. Our journalists are busy working with and photographing people from different walks of life, but we’d also like to include your contributions in this series. So what’s your story been during the pandemic? How are you different today than you were one year ago? We welcome your thoughts, whether brief or lengthy. Send us your perspective by emailing editor@paweekly.com or by leaving a three-minute voicemail message at 650-223-6514 by Wednesday, March 10. You’ll need to leave your contact information so we can get in touch with you.

To read the reflections now of one local resident, see this week’s guest opinion column on page 16, written by former Palo Alto Weekly staff writer Rachel Kellerman, who became a contacttracer last year.
Location, location, location! Beautiful townhome on a quiet, tree-lined street conveniently located just two blocks from the Sunnyvale Caltrain station and a stone’s throw from historic Murphy Ave, eateries, Farmers Market, & shopping. With only five units in the community, it has the charm that is commensurate with living in a neighborhood of single family homes. Offering an open floor plan and a gourmet kitchen with handsome cabinets, granite counters, and stainless steel appliances plus a wine refrigerator. Amenities include: hardwood floors in tiled entry, newly carpeted bedrooms, an oversized 2-car garage, and a secluded rear yard that’s perfect for al fresco dining.

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Local camps are preparing, awaiting state guidance and hoping that parents and children are willing to return

by Lloyd Lee

J ust two months into 2021, camps on the Midpeninsula are already looking to make a comeback this summer, which would include, for some, an ambitious revival of their overnight programs.

“We feel very confident that we’ve got a good game plan to keep everybody safe this summer and still have a lot of fun,” said Jim Politis, camp director of Mountain Camp Woodside, which is hosted at Woodside Priory School’s campus.

Unlike some camps in the nation that pushed to keep their programs running last year, Mountain Camp Woodside, along with the side of complete caution and made the difficult decision to shut both down for the past year and over- night operations.

“When the pandemic hit in March, I was on a number of weekly, daily, Zoom calls with my colleagues, which are part of a couple different camp profes- sional associations — just Zoom call after Zoom call about how to operate under health orders,” said Politis. “We were fighting as hard as we could to figure out a way to operate. We had different operating plans, con- tingency plans on what we were going to do — up until the point when we decided not to run.”

On June 15, Politis announced on the company’s Instagram page that the camp wouldn’t be operation- al that summer: “Unfortunately, even if we did everything 100% right, there’s no way we would be able to guarantee everybody’s safety.”

The shutdown of camps would include a multitude of consequences, including financial losses and unemployment. For children, putting the American tradition of sleeping away on hold has led to a missed rite of passage and develop- mental opportunity.

“Summer is the peak of the year out and 16 full-time staff that you use to pay your full-time staff,” said Dave Barth, CEO and director of Run For Fun Camps, which operates a day camp in Palo Alto and overnight camp in Pinecrest Lake. “All of a sudden, not only are you hit with not getting to do what you love, but you lose a lot of the camaraderie that you used to pay your full-time staff.

“You feel a little bit like you lost your identity,” Barth said.

This year, Mountain Camp Woodside, Run For Fun and other local camps are hoping to get people out and back to camp. This decision is not only guided by some optimistic news of increasing vaccine roll- outs, but the pandemic, by case studies and data of which interventions work and which don’t when cohorts of children are put together in con- fined spaces.

But hurdles still lie ahead. Camp directors in California, for example, are still waiting on guid- ance from the state health depart- ment as they continue to formu- late a reopening strategy for their overnight camps.

“Overnight camp is a little more tricky,” Barth said. “I would say there’s a 90% chance that we’re going to run, but we’ll depend on what state guidelines that everyone is waiting for.”

So far, camp directors have had at least some models to look to, including camp leaders as well as regional and national camp associations, such as the Western Association of In- tent Camps and the Ameri- can Camp Association, to deter- mine best practices.

And where state and local guidelines fail, many overnight campers should have (the guideline recom- mends at least 10), directions on disinfecting swimming pools, and a recently added chapter on vaccine protocols and whether to exclude campers who do not get vaccinated (at this time, the guide- lines recommend against it).

Despite the guidance, Barth and Politis both say that a question mark still hangs over overnight programs.

“Everyone’s sort of holding their breath, waiting for that state guideline to officially come out,” Barth said. “(The handbook) is a helpful resource that we’ve been using to create what we think will be our best shot of leading over- night camps successfully.”

In-person day camps are another matter, given that state and local health departments have already outlined safe operating procedures and schools have re- instituted in-person learning.

“Day camps are a little bit easier because we’ve got a lot of models to go off of, i.e. schools,” Politis said.

“For a lot of schools have been operating safely,” said Donnie Gersh, staff director at J- Camp, a day camp that operated last July, campers practiced constant sani- tization and mask-wearing — and sang hand-washing songs.

“We made it fun,” said Re- becca Bigman, camp director of J-Camp. “We created our own mask-wearing camp traditions.”

Research has given camp di- rectors some measure of reassur- ance. A study by Duke University School of Medicine found that day camps that took precautions saw minimal spread of the coronavi- rus. The research was based on an analysis of YMCA day camps in six North Carolina counties that hosted a total of 6,000 children and staff members, and where 39% of camps primarily offered indoor activities.

“My best guess is, probably, at the end of the school year, the vaccine protocol will be a little bit tighter,” said Bigman.

“Fortunately, we’re in an amazing place where we’re able to get people vaccinated in a timely manner,” said Mary Kehoe, camp director of Oshman Family Jewish Community Center’s J-Camp, a day camp that operated last July, and still have a lot of fun,” said Kehoe. “We’re fighting as hard as we could to figure out a way to operate,” Politis said. “We were fighting as hard as we could to figure out a way to operate.”

“All of our measures have been really successful,” Rosenfeld said.

Data on overnight summer camps are a bit more limited. In September, the CDC published a case study of four overnight summer camps in Maine — with 1,022 attendees from 41 states and international locations — that prevented an outbreak by ad- hering to “pre-arrival quarantine, pre- and post-arrival testing and symptom screening, cohorting, use of face coverings, physical distancing, enhanced hygiene measures, cleaning and disinfecting, and maximal outdoor programming.”

(continued from page 30)
During a Heart Attack, Every Minute Counts

**Know the warning signs:**

- Chest discomfort, pain, or pressure that lasts for more than a few minutes, or that goes away and returns
- Upper body discomfort or pain, including in the arms, back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Lightheadedness, nausea, or vomiting
- Extreme fatigue
- Cold sweat

Chest pain is the most common symptom of a heart attack in men and women. Women are more likely to report some of the other common symptoms listed above. The hospital is still the safest place you can be in an emergency. Don't hesitate. Call 911.

Caring for your heart is essential, even during the pandemic. Make cardiovascular health a priority starting this Heart Month by exercising, eating a balanced diet, keeping up routine medical visits, and promptly addressing signs of illness. We are prepared to safely care for you.

Learn more about cardiovascular health at [stanfordhealthcare.org/heartmonth](http://stanfordhealthcare.org/heartmonth)
Ernlé William Dyer Young

Ernlé William Dyer Young reached the end of his earthly Incredible Journey on February 14, 2021, surrounded by love in his own home. His journey began in Johannesburg, South Africa, born to Peggy and Weldon Young on December 14, 1932. He met the love of his life when he was nineteen and she was sixteen, and they embarked on a lifelong adventure together. He will be deeply missed by his wife, Margaret and his healing dog Tuppy, his daughter Heather and her husband Peter, his son Andrew and his wife Maria and their daughters Alex and Christi, his daughter Jenny and her husband Gino and their daughter Andriana and sons Daniel, Michael and Nicholas, his son Timothy and his wife Eryn and their son Levon, and his nephews Gavin and Robin. He leaves behind a large extended family and a wide circle of loving friends.

Ernlé expressed his talents in many ways over the years, as a printer, theologian, Methodist minister, anti-apartheid activist, biomedical ethicist and professor. He was a fiercely independent thinker with a deep sense of social justice and a restlessness about the status quo. Coupled with his generous spirit and big heart, this assured that he “comforted the afflicted and afflicted the comfortable.” His curiosity and courage took him all over the world and into many interesting situations, including clashes with the apartheid government of South Africa, ultimately leading to his immigration to California and his rewarding career as a professor at Stanford University where he co-founded the Center for Biomedical Ethics, served as Associate Dean of Memorial Church and led the Stanford University Hospital Chaplaincy Department. He culminated his career overseeing ethical conduct of research at NASA Ames Research Center, then retired to Talent Oregon in 2013.

Ernlé was an avid runner, tennis player, backpacker, and creative cook and gardener, trusted mentor, and loyal friend. His priority was always his family, for whom he exemplified love, commitment, joy, and presence. His values, the life he created for himself and his family, and the many lives he touched are his legacy. Donations in his memory may be sent to Ravenswood Family Health Network, Ecumenical Hunger Program, or the ASPCA.
Ronald Jay Sax
January 2, 1933 – February 13, 2021

Ronald Jay Sax passed away peacefully on February 13, 2021 after thankfully short battles with Parkinson’s Disease and cancer. Born and raised in Benton Harbor, Michigan, he hadn’t traveled farther than Chicago until he joined the Air Force in 1952. His four years in the Air Force took him around the United States and to Japan, setting off a series of fateful events. After his service, he returned home to attend Central Michigan University, where he joined the International Club, sparked by his interest in Japan. There he met and fell in love with Katoko, a foreign exchange student from Japan who would become his wife of 50 years. During that half century, he was a husband, father, grandfather, friend, traveler, jazz enthusiast, runner, and advocate for peace and justice.

Ron and Katoko were living near Chicago with their two young children when, just after the Chicago Blizzard of 1967, a job opportunity arose in sunny California. They took it! Ron loved, and thrived in, his new hometown of Palo Alto. He was a computer programmer and spent the rest of his career working for SLAC (Stanford Linear Accelerator Center), Stanford University and finally RLG (Research Libraries Group), from which he retired in 2000. The place and time gave him a front row seat to watch Silicon Valley develop. He traveled the world with his wife and family, taking hundreds of trips to over 40 countries and many more places within the United States, reaching out to friends and family everywhere they went. He trained himself to be a long distance runner, competing in countless races, including three San Francisco Marathons. He joined the Board of PAJA (Palo Alto Jazz Alliance) and traveled to Cuba in 2000 on a jazz-oriented trip sponsored by PAJA. He was an active member of the Palo Alto Friends Meeting and, among other contributions, gave his time to Hotel de Zink, a shelter program hosted by PAFM, distributing meals every December for 20 years.

He loved learning, travel, sports and music, and nothing gave him more pleasure than seeing his four grandsons participating in those endeavors. Over the years he took them on various trips, went to many of their recitals, presentations and sporting events, and was filled with pride upon attending their graduations, having made it to all four high school and two college ceremonies (the rest are in progress).

His love for his children, Naomi (Neil Simmons) and Kenji (Cindy Lamerson), and grandchildren, Nathan, Joel, Nick and Scott, passion for learning, concern for the world, and his kind and gentle ways will be missed by all those who knew and loved him.

Due to Covid-19, the family will hold a private memorial at home.

In lieu of flowers, we ask that donations be made to the Danville d’Elegance Foundation (for Parkinson's research), www.danville-delegance.org.
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12160 Kate Drive, Los Altos Hills · $16,800,000

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Guest Opinion

Behind closed doors: The pandemic’s quiet warriors

by Rachel Kellerman

Since July, I’ve worked as a Santa Clara County disaster volunteer conducting contact tracing. My friends and family have kindly praised this effort, but the personal benefits I’ve gained from doing this important public health work have far outweighed my commitment. In a time of great uncertainty, this work gives me direction and purpose and knowledge that there is a path forward as long as we all work together following the Public Health Department’s guidance.

When the pandemic hit, I was in the middle of my second year of retirement after a 30-year career in public education working as a teacher and librarian. In early March my husband and I returned from our first trip to South America, a journey we had saved for and dreamed about for a very long time. Two days before we arrived home, a friend emailed me and she had bought extra bottles of Tylenol and toilet paper for us because stores were running out of these basic items. It was alarming to arrive home to such uncertainty, soon followed by news reports of sharply rising COVID-19 infections and deaths.

In April, our son, who lives in New York, showed us photos of portable morgues in nearby neighborhoods. It was hard for him to sleep at night because sirens blared at all hours. In May, our daughter moved in with us for a few weeks. She’s a preschool speech therapist at a local public school, and I watched her try to figure out how to engage energetic preschoolers on this new video conferencing platform called Zoom. My husband started working from home, too. Even though he missed the commradery of his office mates, he adjusted pretty easily. I, on the other hand, was a wreck.

In June, I abandoned all pretense of reading or doing much else and became obsessed with the news. This was not healthy. Feeling powerless never is. But I was fortunate. My family wasn’t sick. We had housing, food and a good Internet connection. Palo Alto was doing a good job of updating us on all the changes to our community, and, thanks to their efforts, I read about the county’s need for contact tracers.

In late June, I began training in the county’s excellent contact tracing program. In July, I made my first confidential phone call. The contact tracing interview is designed to help people who test positive for COVID-19 recover and isolate safely and to advise people who have been in close contact with the virus to quarantine and test. The most important questions we ask are: “How are you feeling?” and “How can we help?” Thanks to a language translation service, we can ask these questions in any language, and we strive to be culturally aware and respect every individual and family situation.

Some of the most challenging conversations I’ve had are around the importance of quarantine. We tell people who have been in close contact with the virus but have tested negative and are not experiencing symptoms to quarantine inside their homes for 10 days after their last contact with the virus and to watch for symptoms for an additional four days. This is a big sacrifice. People who are in quarantine are feeling fine, yet they must stay apart from others because they are potentially infectious. They cannot work. They cannot shop for groceries. They cannot go out into the world. They are home yet must fight the natural impulse to hold their ail ing loved ones close for fear they will get infected.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 infections tend to roll through families. As member after member of a family tests positive, some people endure an extended quarantine situation that can last for weeks. Their individual actions help stop the spread of COVID-19 but at tremendous cost to their incomes and well-being. There has been so much reporting in the news about loud and angry groups of people who refuse to follow simple public health practices, like wearing a mask, but not nearly enough coverage of the quiet warriors who protect us all by enduring home quarantine.

We owe everyone who isolates and quarantines when faced with the virus a great debt of thanks. Behind their closed doors, they are a powerful weapon against the virus. We can show our respect and gratitude by continuing to follow public health guidelines such as mask wearing, avoiding crowds, testing when appropriate and getting a vaccine when eligible. For people who have questions about the vaccine, take the time to learn about its importance by exploring the county’s vaccination website, which is updated frequently, at scctrcvax.org.

Our contact tracing training is ongoing and provides the support required to engage with strangers on the phone about some of life’s most difficult problems. During one training session given just prior to the winter surge, we were asked two questions about the pandemic’s emotional impact on our lives. What brings you desolation? What brings you consolation? When I think about how this year has changed me, my family and our community, I think about those questions and how they intertwine.

I grieve for the communities and workers who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, but hope that this glaring disparity will lead to better public health policies and economic investment. I lament the lost time in the physical presence of others but have learned new ways to connect remotely. Uncertainty can breed stress and despair but can also motivate someone like me to grab hold of a new opportunity for public service. I’m grateful for this volunteer work, and for the measure of peace and purpose it has brought during this pandemic year.

Rachel Kellerman is a retired educator and community volunteer.

Guest Opinion

Natural gas and electrification

Editor,

In “City seeks new ways to fight climate change” (Palo Alto Weekly, Feb. 19), a city council member claims that “we all agree that climate change is the single biggest threat facing us at the moment.” That’s not true. The biggest threats are incompetent political leaders, misguided and destructive government mandates, ignorance and innumeracy.

I burn about 300 therms of natural gas per year for hot water and home heating. Each thern burned releases 12 pounds of CO2, so my annual CO2 emission from natural gas is 3,600 pounds (1.6 metric tons). In the California Cap-and-Trade Program, CO2 emissions are priced at around $17/ton, so I could offset my natural gas CO2 emissions for about $50/year. The story says that some people “may be unable to afford electrification or unwilling to pay more than $15,000 to electrify their homes.” Maybe they’re too intelligent: What idiot would spend $15,000 to offset $30 per year?

Jonathan Seder
Fulton Street, Palo Alto
1958 MENALTO AVENUE, MENLO PARK

Bright, Stylish, and a Modern Floorplan

Nestled in the sought-after Willocks neighborhood, this stylish 3-bedroom, 3-bathroom home offers bright interiors, chic finishes, and nearly 1,800 square feet of inviting living space. Beautiful wood floors extend throughout the main level, while designer touches include crown molding and plantation shutters. This home enjoys an open floorplan ideally suited for a modern family lifestyle, with amenities including the living room with centerpiece fireplace, the granite-appointed kitchen, and the family room set beneath a tray ceiling. The master suite offers an inviting retreat, and this home also boasts open office space to work from home in style. Find al fresco enjoyment in the brilliantly landscaped front yard that features an inviting fire pit. And enjoy a location that puts you just moments to both downtown Menlo Park and Palo Alto, Stanford University, and US 101, with access to top-ranked Menlo Park schools (buyer to verify eligibility).

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1118 GUINDA STREET, PALO ALTO

The sought-after Community Center neighborhood provides the perfect backdrop for this enchanting home designed by renowned architect Roger Kohler, offering 5 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, an office, and nearly 2,800 square feet of elegant living space. Vaulted ceilings and excellent use of glass craft a bright, airy ambiance throughout both levels of the home. A spectacular 2-way fireplace highlights both the living room and dining room, the kitchen features stainless-steel appliances, and the family room offers plenty of space for movie nights. Five bedrooms include the comfortable master suite, plus a convenient guest suite ideal for friends and family. And the backyard offers private, low-maintenance enjoyment with a large patio and built-in brick grill. This great location is mere moments to the excitement of University Avenue, and close to both Rinconada Park and Eleanor Pardee Park. Plus, children may attend top-ranked schools including Walter Hays Elementary, Greene Middle, and Palo Alto High (buyer to verify eligibility).

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Stylish Living in Community Center

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中文聯絡人鈴暉Audrey Sun, DRE #01933274 電話: 650.785.5822 | www.deleonrealty.com | DeLeon Realty, Inc. | DRE #01903224
Stunning Tuscan Estate on 1.34 Acres

Luxury, elegance, and privacy – this spectacular estate offers all of this, and so much more, with 4 bedrooms, 4.5 bathrooms, and over 5,200 square feet (per appraisal) of refined living space, nestled on 1.34 peaceful acres in Los Altos Hills. A gated courtyard welcomes you and leads to a patio with stunning, unobstructed views that stretch to the San Francisco Bay. Inside, soaring ceilings and excellent use of glass craft a bright, airy ambiance, highlighting high-end appointments including floors of both hickory and slate, countertops of marble, granite, and onyx, decorative ironwork, marble bathrooms, and custom cabinetry. Two levels with elevator convenience boast amenities such as the expansive living room with fireplace, the gourmet eat-in kitchen, the spacious office, and the 640-bottle wine cellar. The retreat-like master suite enjoys a private balcony showcasing the home’s incredible views, while the home’s additional bedrooms include a convenient guest suite. Adding to the appeal is the backyard with a sparkling pool, plus a 4-car garage with workshop space. Plus, you will find yourself just a short trip to downtown Los Altos, nature preserves, top tech companies, and acclaimed Los Altos schools.

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Los Altos Stage Company brings the ‘PAIN’

Michael Champlin to livestream Will Eno’s enigmatic one-person play by John Orr

When “Thom Pain (based on nothing),” by Will Eno showed up in 2004, many theater critics were almost at sea when trying to describe it. But pretty much all of them were in awe of its beautiful writing.

It was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and was otherwise honored. Still, what is it about?

Local actor Michael Champlin will be giving audiences chances to think about it themselves when he delivers the one-man show for Los Altos Stage Company in six livestreamed performances beginning Feb. 26.

“Will Eno, as a playwright, likes to give these almost esoteric musings to the audience,” Champlin said during a recent Zoom interview.

The play “is about the struggle between thinking and feeling, between heart and mind, and how we get in our own ways,” Champlin said. “Do we see the world, do we accept it or let it sabotage itself?”

Part of the cleverness of Eno’s writing is how he builds the story through connected ideas. “All through ‘Thom Pain,’” Champlin said, “there are thoughts that come in relation to the stories he tells. The stories create a feeling, and make him think of something more.”

It’s not exactly a narrative timeline.

“ ‘This surreal kind of existence, when the outside doesn’t exist. So much of it is focusing more on directing in film,’” Champlin said.

But theater continued to pull him in, and he taught theater and storytelling in Manhattan theaters, and thanks to a grandparent in the living room.”

By Feb. 19, Champlin had already started running “Thom Pain” at the Bus Barn and had gotten comfortable in the environment.

“ ‘It fits for this character. The entire show is direct to audience. It’s written to deliver to an engaged audience. It’s a fit for the void we all exist in now (during the COVID-19 lockdown),’ he said.

“This surreal kind of existence, when you can almost trick yourself into thinking the outside doesn’t exist. So much of that fits the theme of ‘Thom Pain.’”

More information is available at losaltosstage.org/livestream-shows.

Contributing Writer John Orr can be emailed at johnorr@regardingarts.com.
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WEEK 3 July 26-30 Bioinformatics/Bioengineering

REGISTRATION: Will open on March 1st, 2021 on our website.
INFORMATION: Visit explore.stanford.edu
Susie is a local sous chef who spends her days on the line, making Mediterranean grain bowls with turmeric-coriander rice, chickpea, roasted vegetables, crispy garbanzo beans and drizzles of a spicy, bright-red chermoula sauce. She’s the ideal employee: She works impossibly long hours without complaint,的主要优点在于高效率和低成本。Susie’s menu is vast, with more than 12 nozzles that process liquid ingredients, mixed at a ratio that’s preset in a recipe and then dispensed into a cup. The drink is blended using patented technology that mimics the motion of a bartender shaking a cocktail. The company’s founders believe that automating drinks will bring in additional revenue to restaurants, which would no longer need to hire or pay for a human bartender or barista. Botrista’s robot is in restaurants in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle and Taiwan, and the company has ambitious plans to add 300 more locations nationwide by the end of the year.

Chowbotics, Redwood City: Chowbotics debuted Sally the salad-making robot at the now-closed Calafia Cafe in Palo Alto in 2017. Sally, a 3-by-3-by-6-foot box that can operate 24/7, has since graduated from salad to customizable grain and poke bowls, parfaits, cereals and snacks and has been installed at universities, hospitals and grocery stores. Third-party delivery company DoorDash acquired Chowbotics this month, stating in an announcement that the robot will help restaurants “expand their current menu offerings as well as reach new customers in new markets without investing in an entirely new store.”

Yo-Kai Express, Hayward: Yo-Kai Express is using automation to bring high-quality ramen to offices throughout the Bay Area, including in Mountain View — pitched as a workaround to the cost and labor challenges of setting up a company cafeteria. The ramen machines are now in hospitals, hotels, airports, college campuses and the Metreon in San Francisco. Last month, the company took automation into the home kitchen with a smart appliance that includes a coffee maker, a high-induction cooktop and a steamer all in one.

Zume, Mountain View: Zume Pizza may offer a cautionary tale for rapid automation expansion. The company raised $5.7 million for a robotic pizza assembly line and special trucks that can bake pizzas en route (potentially someday delivered by self-driving vehicles). But by 2020, the company laid off more than 250 employees and announced it was shutting down its pizza operation to focus on other opportunities. — Elena Kadvany

TECHNOLOGY

The rise of food-making robots

Here are four local companies betting on automation and robotics for the future of food

Botrista, Redwood City: Botrista’s DrinkBot can make custom drinks in seconds using 12 nozzles that process liquid ingredients, mixed at a ratio that’s preset in a recipe and then dispensed into a cup. The drink is blended using patented technology that mimics the motion of a bartender shaking a cocktail. The company’s founders believe that automating drinks will bring in additional revenue to restaurants, which would no longer need to hire or pay for a human bartender or barista. Botrista’s robot is in restaurants in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle and Taiwan, and the company has ambitious plans to add 300 more locations nationwide by the end of the year.

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Yo-Kai Express, Hayward: How about a bowl of black garlicky tonkotsu ramen, made in 45 seconds inside a vending machine? Yo-Kai Express is using automation to bring high-quality ramen to offices throughout the Bay Area, including in Mountain View — pitched as a workaround to the cost and labor challenges of setting up a company cafeteria. The ramen machines are now in hospitals, hotels, airports, college campuses and the Metreon in San Francisco. Last month, the company took automation into the home kitchen with a smart appliance that includes a coffee maker, a high-induction cooktop and a steamer all in one.

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Automated eats
(continued from page 27)

Until Susie is fully operational, Minnich is making the bowls, his hands imitating the actions of the robot.

“It’s the exact same preparation and steps of reheating and cooling and saucing that the robot’s going to do,” he said. “Essentially, I’m just the robot.”

Minnich, the former chef de cuisine at the Michelin-starred Madera in Menlo Park and executive chef of The Commissary in San Francisco, is now the culinary director at Kitchentown, a food startup incubator in San Mateo that’s housing Mezli. He said he wasn’t freaked out when a group of Stanford software and hardware engineers approached him with the idea of a mass-produced robot that could do his job. Food robots are nothing new — Bay Area companies have already applied automation to burgers, salads, ramen, pizza and croissants — and he knew firsthand the costs and challenges of the local restaurant labor shortage.

“The industry has its own struggles it’s going through as far as finding people who actually want to wash dishes and be cooks. There was already a need and demand for technology like this to come in and work with restaurants,” he said. “If you can’t hire anybody to fill the position anyway, a robot’s not really going to take anybody’s job.”

Kolchinski doesn’t see Mezli as supplanting traditional restaurants, where people go for social interaction as much as to eat. Mezli will never offer sit-down service and is geared toward takeout and delivery for people who want a convenient, fast meal they can eat at their desk or grab after work.

“A sit-down restaurant is a social activity; it’s a neighborhood fixture; there’s the human interaction side,” Kolchinski said. “This is much more, honestly, utility.”

For now, you can order Mezli bowls out of Kitchentown but they’re still made by Minnich. They plan to have Susie up and running in the next month or two. They hope to start at their alma mater’s campus and then test her more widely in other locations by next year. Down the line, the robots could expand into more cuisines, including Indian, Chinese, Mexican and Vietnamese, Kolchinski said. They recently debuted lamb kofte bowls, the most expensive menu item at $7.99.

Mezli is open for takeout and delivery Monday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 1007 Howard Ave. in San Mateo. More information is at mezli.com.

About the cover:
Robots could be the future of fast food as restaurants turn to autonomous kitchens. Illustration by Douglas Young.
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on city-owned land at 1275 San Antonio Road, it also identified the Baylands property on Geng Road as an option.

The two council members cited in the memo the substantial increase in residents who live in vehicles, which can be seen parked on main thoroughfares such as El Camino Real and on quieter streets.

“The city of Palo Alto must address this matter from a health and safety standpoint,” the memo states. “The effort must be made to find immediate short and long term solutions. The ultimate goal is to provide assistance to people to get them back on the path to stable housing.”

It was not the city’s first attempt to address the car camping situation. In 2012, the city tried to solicit the aid of local churches with the idea of housing people in their parking lots. That effort failed largely due to lack of cooperation from the congregations.

Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, who worked with cities to establish the new parking programs, said on Feb. 19 that while the lots are not a long-term solution, safe parking “allows residents to have stability in a program, out of the program, into a better place.”

Simitian cited the county’s most recent homeless census, which showed 18% of the county’s unhoused residents live in vehicles. That’s up from 8% in 2015 and 2017, according to the announcement.

On Feb. 19, the city needs to do more to “help the most vulnerable among us, like those living in vehicles, have a safe base to get back on their feet.”

“This is fantastic progress with hopefully more to come,” DuBois said in a statement.

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be emailed at gsheyner@paweekly.com.

In May, he’ll return home to Palo Alto and be a summer camp counselor, with or without having received the vaccine, he said.

“Being in a summer camp as a kid, I know how much of a meaningful experience it is for kids,” he said. “I’m hoping to give back to my community by allowing kids to have a similar experience I had.”

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

Safe parking (continued from page 5)

Camps (continued from page 10)

Safe parking lot at 2000 Geng Road

Camping options in the Palo Alto area include RV camping, tent camping, and car camping. The city of Palo Alto has approved several parking programs to help residents who live in vehicles.

The parking programs allow residents to park their vehicles in designated lots on weekends and evenings. The lots are located in various parts of the city, including the Baylands Athletic Center, 101 Embarcadero Road, and San Francisquito Creek Athletic Center.

The lots are open from 5 p.m. to 7 a.m. on weekdays and from 5 p.m. to midnight on weekends. The lots are open to residents of Palo Alto and adjacent cities.

The city of Palo Alto has also provided a list of campsites and RV parks in the area. The list includes sites that are open year-round and sites that are open only during the summer months.

The list of campsites and RV parks is available on the city’s website at http://www.paloaltoonline.com/campsites/

For more information, please contact the city of Palo Alto at 650-962-3642 or email info@paloaltoonline.com.

Camp Connection

Find local summer camps starting on page 21.

Upfront

Public Agenda

A preview of Palo Alto government meetings next week

CITY COUNCIL ... The council plans to meet in a closed session to discuss labor negotiations pertaining to the Utilities Management and Professional Association of Palo Alto; the Service Employees International Union, Local 521; the Palo Alto Police Officers Association; the Palo Alto Fire Chiefs’ Association; the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 1310; and the Palo Alto Managers Association. The council also will discuss in a closed session existing litigation: Yang Shen v. City of Palo Alto. The council will then consider a proposal from Jay Paul for a new zoning overlay district on Park Boulevard that would allow office uses in seven buildings; appoint new members to the Historic Resources Board and the Planning and Transportation Commission; consider budget amendments and provide direction on rent forgiveness to tenants at city properties; and approve the city auditor’s risk assessment and annual audit plan. The closed session will begin at 5 p.m. on Monday, March 1, and the rest of the virtual meeting is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 362 027 238. For more information, please contact the city of Palo Alto at 650-962-3642 or email info@paloaltoonline.com.

UTILITIES ADVISORY COMMISSION ... The commission plans to consider approving the 10-year energy efficiency goals for 2022-2031; and consider the fiscal year 2022 financial plans for the gas, electric and wastewater utilities. The virtual meeting will begin at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, March 3. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 966 9129 7246. For more information, please contact the city of Palo Alto at 650-962-3642 or email info@paloaltoonline.com.

STATE OF THE CITY ... Mayor Tom DuBois will present his “State of the City” speech in a virtual ceremony. The event will begin at 7 p.m. on March 4. Those wishing to watch the event on Zoom can access it by going to http://cityofpaloalto.zoom.us/j/99416402547 and using Meeting ID: 994 1640 2547. For more information, please contact the city of Palo Alto at 650-962-3642 or email info@paloaltoonline.com.
two major benefits: It will reduce the city’s reliance on contractors who enforce parking, making it easier for legal parkers from intruding into neighborhoods or attempting to circumvent rules by moving their cars a few blocks,” Kamhi said.

Nathan Baird, the city’s parking manager, said the current parking enforcement program is projected to cost $776,159 this fiscal year. Installing license plate readers would provide immediate and ongoing cost savings: The cost would shrink to $329,159 — a savings of $427,000 — this fiscal year. In fiscal years 2022 and 2023, the switch would save $267,000 and $287,899, respectively.

In addition, the technology provides invaluable data for understanding how well parking program measures are doing and addressing parking demand over time,” he said.

Not everyone, however, is thrilled about the way the new technology is being rolled out. John Guislin, a Crescent Park resident who served on a stakeholder group that helped establish downtown’s residential parking program, objected to the impact on privacy.

“Surveillance technology is not acceptable in residential neighborhoods where families have a right to privacy,” Guislin wrote in a letter to the council.

To address privacy concerns, city staff proposed policies on data collection: If a vehicle is not involved in a citation, the city would store its license plate image for a maximum of 96 hours before it is automatically deleted. However, images and license plate numbers attached to parking citations would be retained for five years.

Also, license plate data “shall be used only by the city and authorized vendors for parking enforcement and data collection purposes,” the policy states. While parking occupancy data would be made available to the public, it would “never include specific license plate numbers,” according to the policy.

Guislin and other residents also questioned the city’s decision to debut the technology in residential neighborhoods. Guislin suggested that the city should experiment with the technology in the business core, where garages and parking lots would benefit from improved capacity management.

Palo Alto has suggested surveillance testing once a month for adults in contact with students, who enforce the city’s Residential Parking districts to enforce parking.

Palo Alto hasuggested surveillance testing once a month for adults in contact with students, who enforce the city’s Residential Parking districts to enforce parking.

The City Council on Monday night agreed to purchase license plate readers, which will be used in the city’s Residential Parking districts to enforce parking.

“The surveillance technology is acceptable in urban areas because people have a lower expectation of privacy when engaged in commercial transactions,” Guislin wrote to the council. “In the business core, where businesses and buildings are not as dense, it is easier to monitor who is using the garage and who is not.”

Regarding the cost, Guislin suggested that in “debunking the license plate readers, the city is straying from its broader effort to deter enforcement from parking in neighborhoods.”

“Why are you surveilling resi-

dents and maximizing parking in residential areas when the need is elsewhere?” resident Carol Scott asked the council on Monday. Council members on Mon-
day also raised privacy concerns but concluded that the city’s safeguards are sufficient to ensure that private information will not be collected or released. They also suggested that the city find ways to expand the use of automated license plate readers to other parts of the city, including the newly constructed garage on Sherman Avenue in the Cali-

fornia Avenue business district. Council member Greg Tanaka suggested installing them at garage entrances so that the city will know exactly who is using these facilities. Council member Greer Stone and Mayor Tom Du-
Bois also suggested that the city would like to see the technology in use else-
where in the city.

“I understand the concerns we heard from the public,” DuBois said. “I think the intentions are correct and the goals are correct. I support this and I hope we can get to the rest of the areas as quickly as we can throughout the city.”

But Chief Transportation Of-
cutive Kamhi noted that bringing the technology to city garages involves numerous obstacles. Parking regulations in downtown Palo Alto are based on the “color zones” and which includes areas with varying time limits — are much more complex than they are in residential neighborhoods, making the use of license plate readers there more complicated. Another wrinkle is opposition from some city employees, which have expressed their own privacy concerns about the license plate readers.

And while some residents and council members questioned the need to install the technology at a parking time when demand is low, Kamhi stressed the need for the city to prepare for the return of commuters.

“It’s going to take us some time to get it started out there,” Kamhi said. “We anticipate parking demand is going to be low for a while, but that doesn’t mean we don’t need to be prepared for parking demand’s return, and not-

ing that, we’re looking to restart commercial and residential en-
forcement.”

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In addition to running the top listing team in Silicon Valley, Michael Repka is also the Chief Executive Officer and General Counsel of DeLeon Realty. Michael has two law degrees, including an advanced law degree in taxation (LL.M) from NYU School of Law, the #1 tax program in the nation. Prior to joining DeLeon Realty, Michael was a practicing real estate and estate-planning attorney. Michael also worked at PricewaterhouseCoopers, focusing on mergers and acquisitions, and later at Baker & McKenzie, specializing in tax law.

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The City Council is set to decide in March whether Castilleja will be permitted to redevelop its property and increase enrollment, and under what conditions. Learn about the key issues that still separate supporters from opponents and the conditions of approval that the council will be considering.

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