READYING FOR
WILDFIRE

AMID DROUGHT, AGENCIES GEAR UP TO PREVENT REPEAT OF LAST SUMMER • PAGE 7

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After outages, Palo Alto Utilities vows to improve reliability

City conducts third-party review of electric systems and procedures, upgrades to phone systems

By Gennady Sheyner

For the City of Palo Alto Utilities, an organization that prides itself on reliability, March 27 marked the beginning of a brutal and humbling half-month stretch.

That was when a maintenance project went awry at the Park Boulevard substation, cutting off power for about 7,000 customers for about two hours. The power failure, which occurred just before 5 p.m., was accompanied by a communication breakdown: As the city struggled to get the word out, the Utilities Department’s outage map malfunctioned; and hundreds of customers who called to report the outage were greeted with automatic messages, placed into queues or hung up on.

Even days later, customers and members of the media struggled to understand what caused the outage. City Manager Ed Shikada and utilities staff repeatedly referred to a “preventive maintenance project” that went wrong at the substation without defining what that means.

Ultimately, it was determined that the March 27 outage occurred when the circuit breakers were replaced at an aging substation. The project involved changing settings on substation relays — devices in power systems that disconnect an element from the system from service when it suffers a short circuit or starts to operate abnormally, according to Catherine Elvert, communications manager at the Utilities Department.

Relays, she said, are designed to prevent shorts or abnormal operations from interfering with the rest of the system.

After the relays were put back into service at the substation, however, they initiated a circuit breaker to trip, causing the power outage.

“These are abnormal operating conditions at a substation and...”

(continued on page 36)

Street closures, which the city instituted in May and June to create outdoor dining space, have been met with widespread acclaim, with 96% of the respondents to a recent city survey saying they would like to see California Avenue remain car-free and 97% favoring an extended closure of University Avenue.

“This is bringing life back to Palo Alto,” resident John McDowell said Monday during the City Council’s deliberation of the program’s future. “It helps our small businesses. It also gives us an opportunity to take our families out, to meet with other people.”

Some business owners, however, are less enthusiastic. Rob Fischer of Peninsula Creamery and Mike Stone from Mollie Stone’s Market, both said the closures have been bad for business. Stone said keeping California Avenue remain car-free and the explosion of parklets in the city’s commercial zones was a speck of good news in a dismal year.

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Fischer, whose restaurant is located on Hamilton Avenue, said that the closure of University Avenue helps some businesses at the expense of others.

“When you close the street and...”

(continued on page 39)

School district to bring back in-person graduations

Seniors likely to receive diplomas on high school football fields

By Lloyd Lee

In an effort to restore some of the lost traditions of the high school experience as health restrictions loosen, Palo Alto Unified School District is bringing back in-person graduation ceremonies for seniors at Gunn and Palo Alto high schools.

Superintendent Don Austin told the Weekly “there’s no doubt” that graduating students will walk across their school fields to accept their diplomas this year.

“Probably a couple of weeks ago, it started to look real double,” he said.

The details are currently being worked out between district leaders and school principals as well as the Santa Clara County Public Health Department and will be released as early as Friday, April 23, Austin said.

Administrators from Gunn and Palo Alto high schools are currently eyeing their respective football fields for the ceremonies, which will be a slight change for Palo Alto High School as graduation was held on a different campus field prior to the pandemic.

Although every graduating senior will have the opportunity to attend the ceremonies, Austin emphasized that the number of allowable attendees remains unclear since the crowd size will be based on what’s allowed under the state’s colored tier system. The audience could range...
This is bringing life back to Palo Alto.

— John McDowell, Palo Alto resident, on extending street closures through October. See story on page 5.

THE WORLD OF ADULTING

... Adulthood can be confusing for young people as they break away from their youth and navigate newfound responsibilities. Many of us could’ve used a guide on adulting when we turned 18 years old. Former Stanford University Dean of Freshmen and Undergraduate Advising Julie Lythcott-Haims aims to smooth the transition with perspectives in her new book, “Your Turn: How To Be An Adult,” which she discussed on Monday’s episode of NPR’s Fresh Air. In a nearly 40-minute interview from her Palo Alto home, Lythcott-Haims touched on several ideas captured in her book, such as why she encourages adults to talk to strangers. “You need to learn how to advocate for yourself, treat others with respect, ask for help when you need it, offer help to others,” she said. “Interactions with humans are really the juice of this human experience.” Lythcott-Haims also delved into ideas raised in her first book, “How To Raise An Adult,” such as her warnings against the “overprotecting trap.” She also spoke to growing up as the daughter of a Black man and white woman, which she details in her 2017 memoir, “Real American Girl.” “I was trying not to be, or that I wasn’t bad. I was desperately searching for worth and self-esteem.” From the council in honor of their achievement. The proclamation council members lauded the team and their coach for their accomplishment. ”During a year where we’ve had little to celebrate, you’ve all given us a much-needed boost and a jolt of optimism that we can all really celebrate as a community,” council member Greer Stone said.

ON THE HORIZON... An effort by the Palo Alto City Council and Board of Supervisors to create more homes for adults with developmental disabilities reached a milestone this week, as the board tabled the nonprofit Eden Housing to develop a residential community in Palo Alto at a county-owned site at 525 Charleston Road. The decision means that Eden will be able to use up to $4 million in funding out of the $10 million that the county had designated so far for the effort. Eden is no stranger to the city, having developed the residential community at 801 Alma St. For its new project, it will partner with the nonprofit AbilityPath, which specializes in serving people with special needs. “We’re happy to see them moving forward in addressing a crucial area of need,” county Supervisor Joe Simitian, who helped spearhead the effort, said, at Tuesday’s meeting. "He also lauded the fact that the new housing will be located close to an AbilityPath playground, which was designed for users of all abilities. "I’m looking forward to seeing how this project develops over the next few years. Having AbilityPath in the mix is an added plus, and the location is ideal."
A mid the ruins of last summer’s CZU Lightning Complex fire, a fire still burns in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Its smoke and flames may not be visible, but it’s deep underground, in the root systems of charred redwoods.

The fire would normally be extinguished by winter rains. This year, with 27 inches less rainfall than normal, there wasn’t enough water to finally douse it. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection’s CZU Unit Division Forester Rich Sampson said: “It’s like a peat fire. When you see a 60-foot redwood, think of a root system that can go out 30 to 40 feet on each side and down deep,” he said.

But just because the flames are underground doesn’t mean they’re not dangerous: Fallen needles and leaves have created a new duff layer, and if there is just enough oxygen, dry weather and wind, the surface will catch fire.

Then, burning material carried by the wind can ignite trees, shrubs and grasses, he said.

Such a fire has already broken out. In Santa Mateo County’s Buena Vista Park, fire moved from the redwoods’ underground root systems to the surface, scorching 6 acres on April 2, he said. This year’s continued drought is an ominous sign to Sampson and other local fire officials.

Last year’s dry weather, combined with lightning, caused the 86,509-acre CZU conflagration in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

“We’re going to see fires like this in the summer,” Sampson said of large wildfires similar to the CZU fire.

Cal Fire has already seen five fires in San Mateo County between March 31 and April 5, the majority caused by people burning piles of vegetation or trash. In one case, a controlled burn of grass thatch spread 100 feet to the adjacent timberland before firefighters could extinguish it, he said. The larger, 15-acre North Butano Fire occurred on Jan. 18 when the Bay Area should have been in the midst of its rainy season. Statewide, Cal Fire has logged 2,887 acres burned and 845 incidents, according to its website.

Now some land managers, local agencies and the state of California are seeking to stay a step ahead through their plans to manage vegetation. On April 13, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a $536 million funding plan to help improve California’s wildfire resilience with support from the state legislature. The funding is welcome news to agencies, but even as they await the additional funding, they are already taking proactive measures.

Sampson said fire agencies are currently stepping up patrols. Wildfire cameras enable the agency to check areas quickly and remotely. Cal Fire is also adding staffing: In March, Newsom authorized $80.74 million in emergency funds for 1,399 additional firefighters with Cal Fire to help with fuels management and fire fighting. Some of those seasonal firefighters have already been hired; they usually don’t start work until August.

Along Highway 35 in La Honda, Cal Fire and the San Mateo County Public Works Department have been cutting back vegetation to create shaded fuel breaks, areas where the understory growth has been thinned out or removed to keep fires from spreading into the tree canopy.

In San Mateo County, work will begin this summer in Huddart and Wunderlich county parks to thin forest floor vegetation, remove dead trees and take out small trees up to 8 inches in diameter. Crews will also clear tall, dense brush along the parks’ boundaries, fire roads and residential roads to maintain routes for evacuation, emergency response and fire-fighting.

The work is being done through a partnership of the San Mateo Resource Conservation District and San Mateo County Parks and funded by Cal Fire as part of the California Climate Investments Program, according to a statement from the county parks.

The program will treat 218 acres in Huddart and 184 acres in Wunderlich over the next three years. Both sites are located where forest land abuts residences, the so-called wildland-urban interface, the parks department and conservation district said in a joint statement.

“These projects are vital to protecting our local forests. The 2020 CZU fires showed us that fire knows no borders. Forest management at Wunderlich and Huddart county parks will improve the health of these forest ecosystems, enhance their resistance to catastrophic fire, and help our communities be safer,” said Kelyxx Nelson, executive director of the San Mateo Resource Conservation District, in the statement.

Improving forest health can also help store an estimated 13,500 metric tons of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, the San Mateo County Parks noted.

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has already been working on wildland fire safety, Leigh Ann Gessner, Midpen spokesperson, said in an email.

It has removed eucalyptus on a critical evacuation route along Page Mill Road in partnership with the city of Palo Alto and the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council. It also created a new, shaded fuel break in Coal Creek Preserve along 2.5 miles of existing roads and trails. Upcoming projects include a proposed ecological restoration project for wildland fire protection and fuels management at Bear Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve. The district will hold a public presentation on the project at the April 28 board meeting, she said.

When fire weather strikes, the district will close some preserves and take other precautions to prevent fires being sparked, she said.

Staff members are also considering a new policy for closing preserves during periods of extremely poor air quality when levels of smoke and other particulates are harmful, such as what the region experienced last summer during the CZU fire, but that plan isn’t finalized, she added.

Long term, Midpen’s newly developed Wildland Fire Resiliency Program would expand its vegetation management to reduce wildland fire risk and increase fire suppression. The board will consider certifying the program’s Environmental Impact Report at a public meeting on May 12 at 5 p.m.

The plan “will enable Midpen to increase its fuel reduction work by over 600%. Additional funding will be critical with the cost of our increased work plan projected to be approximately $36 million over 10 years,” Gessner said.

Funding from the state would also be welcome to jump-start a project goal of the multiple-agency Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative, said Seth Shalat, executive director of the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council, a member of the collaborative.

The collaborative is hoping for a forest health grant, one of California’s targeted initiatives. The project would treat more than 900 acres to reduce fire hazards as part of a multiple-year program, he said.

The FireSafe Council is also just starting to work through a backlog of vegetation-management projects that were pushed back due to COVID-19 challenges, Shalet said. Planned projects for this year include work along critical escape routes, including along upper Highway 9 in Saratoga and in northern Santa Clara County along Highway 35 and the Alpine Road area. The work would start near the Skyline Ridge Equestrian Parking Lot entrance and north along Highway 35 through Russian Ridge until the funds run out, he said.

The council mainly works on less complex projects that involve the public and public education, focusing on defensible space to address what he calls “home-ignition zones.” People can clean up their properties to keep them safer from fire should it break out. Gessner agreed that public awareness is key to preventing wildfires.

“With the dry conditions this year, we all need to do our part and stay vigilant. According to Cal Fire, 95% of wildland fires in California are sparked by people,” she said.

Email Staff Writer Sue Dremann at sdremann@paweekly.com.

About the cover: Nicholas Garr, a California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection smokejumping preserve. The pile of burned logs during a controlled burn at the entrance of Huddart Park in Woodside. Photo by Megali Gauthier. Cover design by Douglas Young.
Stanford begins clinical trials to expand Pfizer vaccine access to young children

Study includes participants between ages 2-5

By Kevin Forestieri

Stanford Health Care has begun laying the clinical groundwork to expand COVID-19 vaccine eligibility to the country’s youngest children, joining in a nationwide trial to see how safe and effective the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is for people ages 2 to 5.

The early-phase study, which involves 144 children, is taking a close look at how young children respond to the Pfizer vaccine and whether they can handle the same dose size or experience the same side effects as adults. No vaccines are currently approved for those under 16 years old, and public health officials say extending the vaccine to children will be a key factor in curbing the spread of the virus.

Pfizer is already moving full steam ahead to get the vaccine approved for use in children ages 12 to 15, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is expected to approve the vaccine’s use in children in that age category either this month or in May, said Dr. Yvonne Maldonado, professor of pediatric infectious diseases and of health research and policy at Stanford.

But still in its infancy are trials to determine whether the vaccine remains both safe and effective in children under age 12, which is where Maldonado said Stanford is currently focused. Participants are getting the same Pfizer regimen — two doses three weeks apart — but the first cohort of children is getting a smaller dose. Researchers will test blood samples to check for antibodies and closely monitor patients for signs of a fever, headache, muscle aches and other possible side effects before ramping up dose sizes for later cohorts.

“It’s too early to say what the results will be, but Maldonado said she’s optimistic. “We know that Pfizer did submit data for 12- to 15-year-old (children), and apparently at the adult dose, they did get a very robust immune response,” she said. “We’re hoping that will be true for the younger kids as well.”

Children will be the last group of people eligible for the vaccine. Early on in the pandemic and at the start of vaccine development, the belief was that children didn’t get infected, and if they did, they didn’t get sick, Maldonado said.

Those views, coupled with the decision to shut down schools and cancel social events, created a perception that children were immune to the virus. But the thinking has changed since then, Maldonado said. Children do get sick, and they are at risk of serious long-term symptoms after contracting the virus.

“There have been thousands of hospitalizations, and over 300 children have died,” she said. “It is deadly and fatal in children. It’s not common, but it’s not rare either.”

Data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that more than 2.4 million children ages 5 to 17 have tested positive for COVID-19 in the U.S., followed by nearly 500,000 children ages 0 to 4. That’s a total of 2.9 million cases, or 11.9% of all cases in the country.

Researchers are moving fast to extend vaccine eligibility to children in an effort to reach so-called herd immunity, in which at least 70% of the population has been vaccinated and largely prevents the virus from spreading. Census data shows children under age 18 comprise close to a quarter of the population, making them essential in reaching that target.

Stanford is expected to participate in trials involving older children later this spring, and the current forecast is that the Pfizer vaccine will be available for children under age 12 by 2022. “We have pretty strong evidence that approval for (those) 12 to 15 years old might happen before the summer, we’re hoping. But for those under 12, it’s not likely we’ll see something before the end of the year,” Maldonado said.

Though the first phase of the Pfizer trial at Stanford is already fully enrolled with volunteers, residents can still sign up to participate in future phases. Anyone interested can apply online at red-cap.stanford.edu.

Email Staff Writer Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com.
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**EDUCATION**

Despite progress on homework goals, majority of Paly students say they’re still given too much

Survey finds gap between Gunn, Paly students’ attitudes

By Lloyd Lee

A majority of students within almost all secondary campuses found the workload this past year acceptable, and most students at every level surveyed indicated that they finished homework within a time frame the district has determined is optimal for learning and for social and emotional health.

About 2,900 respondents, or 58% of secondary school students, marked “just right” to the question of how much they’d been assigned, while 38% said “too much” and 4% said “too little.”

The glaring disparity between Gunn and Paly students who felt there was “too much” homework came despite the fact that similar percentages of students (21% at Gunn and 28% at Paly) say they receive more than three hours of homework per night.

For Gunn, the 35% of students who feel overwhelmed by the workload represents a consistent decline, based on the 2017 and 2019 Challenge Success surveys, which differ in some ways from the Panorama Survey in the data collected.

From 2017 to 2021, Gunn saw a 2% decrease in students who said they were getting too much homework, — from 56% in 2017 to 47% in 2019.

Survey data for the 2019 year at Paly is unavailable, but the school recorded a 4% increase, from 47% to 51%, of students marking “too much,” from 2017.

“There is a culture of trying to push for more APs or more rigorous classes,” board member Jennifer DiBrienza said Tuesday. “Obviously we still have more work to do, it looks like, at all of our sites about encouraging students to set their own limits.”

The survey also provided some insight into what students thought the main purpose of their homework is, where they get help, and, one of the more highlighted concerns of the evening, how much time students spend on work outside of school.

The data “help to establish a baseline from which to work when addressing adherence to the board policy,” Sharon Ofek, associate superintendent of education services, read in a statement.

As one of seven key takeaways from the survey, the board highlighted that a large majority of Gunn and Palo Alto high school students who took the survey said they were given three or less hours of homework. Out of 1,200 Gunn respondents, 79% of students said they received zero to three hours of homework per night.

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### Average time spent on homework per night (from Panorama Student Survey results)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>0 to 30 minutes</th>
<th>30 min to 1 hour</th>
<th>1 to 1.5 hours</th>
<th>1.5 to 2 hours</th>
<th>2 to 3 hours</th>
<th>More than 3 hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher</td>
<td>82 (17%)</td>
<td>180 (37%)</td>
<td>112 (23%)</td>
<td>62 (13%)</td>
<td>41 (8%)</td>
<td>13 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>108 (16%)</td>
<td>244 (36%)</td>
<td>150 (22%)</td>
<td>94 (14%)</td>
<td>55 (8%)</td>
<td>24 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JLS</td>
<td>131 (15%)</td>
<td>288 (33%)</td>
<td>185 (21%)</td>
<td>130 (15%)</td>
<td>93 (11%)</td>
<td>34 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunn</td>
<td>27 (2%)</td>
<td>103 (8%)</td>
<td>194 (16%)</td>
<td>310 (25%)</td>
<td>345 (28%)</td>
<td>266 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paly</td>
<td>22 (1%)</td>
<td>97 (8%)</td>
<td>204 (12%)</td>
<td>371 (22%)</td>
<td>533 (31%)</td>
<td>482 (28%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Light green denotes acceptable range.

(continued on page 43)
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How small can housing go?  
Developer proposes ‘microstudios’

Latest ‘planned home’ project would replace Alma Street office building, add 36 apartments

By Gennady Sheyner

Ever since Palo Alto introduced its “planned home” zoning last year and invited developers to pitch residential projects that exceed the zoning code, it has received a diverse array of proposals, from the 24-apartment project proposed in College Terrace to 270 apartments eyed for Fabian Way.

Most applicants so far have relied on the new zoning designation to propose projects with more than 100 residences, with the most promising one preparing to bring 113 apartments to a Ventura neighborhood site near El Camino Real and Olive Avenue.

By contrast, Tarlton Properties is thinking small. Really small.

Its proposal for 955 Alma St., which the City Council plans to review in a pre-screening hearing next month, would replace an existing office building with a mixed-use complex that includes 36 "innovation microstudios" and office space on the ground floor.

Consistent with the council’s recent push to discourage new offices and encourage housing, developer John Tarlton would replace the site’s office space from the current level of about 8,000 square feet to 6,000 square feet, while adding the tiny units.

Located in SOFA-2 neighborhood, on the southern edge of downtown and across the train tracks from the Town & Country Village, the new building would feature apartments with an average size of 342 square feet. Each of them, despite the small size, would contain a bathroom, a washer, a dryer, a galley kitchen and a sofa that folds out into a queen-sized bed.

Heather Young, the project architect, said each residence is designed to be a “very adaptable space.”

“We have no wasted interior space,” Young told the Weekly. “We’re planning for storage of all kinds — foldout desk that tucks away at night.”

Each apartment, according to the application, would have about 34 linear feet of storage, with a retractable coffee table that is convertible to a dining table and that “slips snugly into a media wall to make more floor space.” On the adjacent wall, a fold-down desk will convert to a home office workstation, with recessed storage for a computer and books. Four fold-out chairs will stack above the desk, hidden from view when the cabinet is closed, the application states.

Young said the project was inspired by the developer’s personal experience. Her firm had designed an even smaller microstudio for John Tarlton’s personal property in Palo Alto several years ago. He has been surprised by the strong demand he has received for the unit, which tends to rent out quickly.

“The couples or the singles who rent there always speak very highly of its efficiency,” she said.

To build the four-story project, the applicant is seeking two zoning exceptions that would allow it to exceed the city’s regulations for, respectively, height and density. The property’s zoning designation allows a maximum height of 35 feet; the developer is seeking an increase to 50 feet, consistent with the citywide height limit. It is also requesting that the building density be allowed to increase, with floor-area-ratio going up from 1.15 to 2.68.

Like other developers pitching planned-home projects, Tarlton and Young face a long road ahead of them. After the council review in a pre-screening hearing next month, would replace an existing office building with a mixed-use complex that includes 36 "innovation microstudios" and office space on the ground floor.

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(continued on page 14)
Upfront

A preview of Palo Alto government meetings next week

CITY COUNCIL ... The council plans to meet in a closed session to discuss the city’s labor negotiation with Service Employees International Union, Local 521, the Palo Alto Police Officers Association (PAPOA), the Palo Alto Fire Chiefs’ Association (FCA), the Palo Alto Police Manager’s Association (PAPMA) and the Utilities Management and Professional Association of Palo Alto (UMPAPA). The council then plans to hold a Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act (TEFRA) hearing for the Oshman Family Jewish Community Center at 3921 Fabian Way; and hold a public hearing on the Expanded Community Advisory Panel’s final report on grade separation. The closed session will begin at 5 p.m. on April 26. The rest of the virtual meeting will begin at 6 p.m. or as soon as possible after the closed session. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 362 027 238.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION ... The commission plans to discuss a proposal for adding a skate park; hear an update from the Palo Alto Youth Council; and discuss the commission’s work plan. The virtual meeting will begin at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 27. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 999 3789 9745.

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION ... The commission plans to discuss objective standards for new developments, the new Boards and Commissions handbook and efforts to aid retail recovery. The virtual meeting will begin at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 28. Those wishing to participate by Zoom can do so by dialing 669-900-6833 and using Meeting ID: 958 9263 6758.

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www.PaloAltoOnline.com • Palo Alto Weekly • April 23, 2021 • Page 13
Pamela Drew Kerr
August 29, 1947 – February 5, 2021

Pamela Drew Kerr, daughter of Vaughn and Elsie Kerr and long-time resident of the Peninsula, passed away peacefully from breast cancer on February 5, 2021, surrounded by her friends. Born in New York on August 29, 1947, Pam moved to California with her family during childhood. She survived a bout of polio, which left her with lifelong challenges, but in keeping with her personality, she remained undaunted.

A graduate of Buchser High School (1965), West Valley College, and San Jose State, Pam began her career at Hewlett-Packard in technical research in the early years of Silicon Valley and also worked for her father’s company, Kerr Engineering. She was a Renaissance woman who devoured data and whose greatest passion was art. Pam created a prolific body of paintings and embraced dreams of possibility, from thefloat- ing elegance of Calder mobiles and the ornate perfection of Asian porcelain to the simplicity and utility of ordinary objects and materials. She sought to render the beauty and asymmetry of all that life had to offer, whether in harmony or contention, and held aloft her many friends, surrounded by the chiming of the wind. Pam was a musician, played guitar and piano, and music was in her soul.

Always interested in learning and sharing new things, Pam was a spirited and witty conversationalist. She was very passionate, generous and empathetic and was always willing to fight for the underdog. She also had a great love for animals and provided a home for many over the course of her life.

Pam appreciated the freedom to create her own schedule, eventually became a realtor in the Bay Area and had many other interests and hobbies.

Family & Christianity were important forces in her life from which she took direction and inherited her values. She was especially devoted in her love and caring for her parents, ensuring that their final years were as comfortable as possible.

Pam will be sorely missed by her close friends who appreciated her candor, caring, and forthright spirit. Now, light as a feather, she travels great distances in the blink of an eye and feathered her candor, caring, and forthright spirit. Now, light as a feather, she travels great distances in the blink of an eye and with her personality, she remained undaunted.

June 29, 1947 – February 5, 2021

Laura Barton
September 3, 1942 – April 3, 2021

Laura J. Barton, age 78, of Mountain View, California, left us on April 3rd.

Laura was born in Detroit, MI, on September 3rd, 1942. She graduated from Wilson High School, in Portland, Oregon, class of ’60, then later continued her education receiving a BS in Business Management from the University of San Francisco in 1985. Laura was married to David Barton in 1962 with whom she had two sons, Kenneth born 1964 and Wesley born 1966. They were together 10 years.

By the end of the 1960’s Laura had become a regular performer and singer with the South Bay Area music and drama scenes.

By the time of her spinal cord injury in 1978, she had worked as Music Coordinator for the City of Palo Alto Arts Department. She worked for TheatreWorks Silicon Valley and a partner in Barton-Griswold Publishing which designed and manufactured music theory learning games. She also continued singing in the choir at Trinity Lutheran Church where she was a long-time member, and teaching a mid-week class on Christian Growth.

After recovering she returned to her work as an administrative assistant for Monterey Learning Systems, her company Barton-Griswold, her participation in the Trinity Choir, and started a choir for elementary school children with Sally Treadway called The Palo Alto Choir School; all while keeping up a schedule giving private voice lessons.


Her son Ken’s final conversation with her included planning for her annual party for friends and family featuring a varied list of live musical performances.

Laura is survived by her two children Kenneth and Wesley Barton, her sister Kathy Farnsworth, brother Jerry Schuette, niece Erika Schuette, and many friends.

Laura will be interred at Alta Mesa Cemetery with her parents.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent in her name to Furr-Ever Cat and Kitten Rescue, 108 Bascom Ct., Campbell, CA 95008.

PAM ORFITURY
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Pam will be sorely missed by her close friends who appreciated her candor, caring, and forthright spirit. Now, light as a feather, she travels great distances in the blink of an eye and watches over those who leaves behind. In her passing, and true to form, forever she will chase the endless horizon.

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand*
*And a Heaven in a Wild Flower*
*Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand*
*And Eternity in an hour*

— William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*

Pam will be interred at Alta Mesa Cemetery with her parents. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent in her name to Furr-Ever Cat and Kitten Rescue, 108 Bascom Ct., Campbell, CA 95008.

Housing
(continued from page 12)

offers early feedback at the May 18 hearing, the developer’s team will decide whether to submit a formal application, which would then go through the city’s gamut of boards and commissions before returning to the council for approval.

Recent hearings on other planned-home projects should, however, give the team some reasons for optimism. Earlier this month, the council reaffirmed its commitment to steer planned-home projects away from single-family neighborhoods and toward commercial corridors and areas that are zoned for high-density residential use. Numerous council members — most notably, Greg Tanaka — have also talked frequently about their desire to see projects with smaller units because this would enable more — and more affordable — residential spaces.

When the council was reviewing the planned-home project proposed for 2951 El Camino Real, Tanaka asked the applicant, Acclaim Companies, to consider increasing the number of units by having more studies in its proposal.

“In general, smaller units are naturally more affordable,” Tanaka said.

Young noted that studies are generally set up to be represented in Palo Alto and the proposed project helps create a “balance of units types” in the community.

Since the 36 studios would be designated as affordable housing, with three of those targeting residents in the “very low” income level of 50% or lower, than the county’s average median income.

The project, she said, is particularly suitable for the Alma Street location because of its proximity to the downtown train station and major retail areas. It is also more than 150 feet away from other residential buildings, she said.

“This site in particular is an excellent opportunity for the city to gain some much-needed multi-family housing with the wins of reduced current quantity of office space and the positive impact on the jobs-housing ratio,” Young said.

Email: Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner at gsheyner@pawweekly.com.
Dexter Bailey Dawes, a former CEO who helped pioneer the implementation of Employee Stock Ownership Plans in the early 1970s and later spent his retirement years advising numerous local organizations and nonprofits on their finances, died of esophageal cancer at his Palo Alto home on March 21. He was 84.

Dawes, who described himself as a problem solver, operated largely behind the scenes providing input that helped numerous organizations become and stay financially sound, even during tough times.

Dawes served on a variety of different boards for corporations as well as organizations benefiting everyone from seniors and children to students and Palo Alto families, including the Palo Alto-Los Altos American Youth Soccer Organization, the Philharmonia Baroque Foundation, the Choralale, the Palo Alto High School Sports Boosters and the Bond Oversight Committee and the Audit and Finance Committee for the Foothill De Anza Community College District. In 1971, he received the Avenidas Lifetimes of Achievement Award for his public service.

Rhonda Bekkedahl, CEO of Channing House, said Dawes was key in establishing financial policies that made the not-for-profit retirement community out of a difficult financial position.

“I credit much of our strong financial acumen and our long-term success to Dexter. Dexter helped set us on with his financial acumen and his serious regard for his fiduciary responsibility as a trustee,” Bekkedahl said.

Dawes’ long and storied financial career began in 1963 after he earned a master’s degree in business administration from Harvard College and came to Palo Alto to “run a finance function” for Philco-Ford Aerospace, his son Adam Dawes said.

In the early 1970s, he joined Bangert & Company, a merchant banking firm that specialized in leveraged buyouts and was headed by Louis Kelso, a renowned political economist who created the Employee Stock Ownership Plan, or ESOPs. Dawes shared Kelso’s worker-capitalist vision and helped implement the plan at other companies.

“He was a strong believer in incentives and having people own their business,” said Adam Dawes. Dawes later became a founding member of the boutique investment banking firm Bangert, Johnson, Dawes, Robertson and Thom, which helped companies restructure themselves to a better financial position — a calling card that would follow him for the rest of his life.

In 1996, he retired from John Hancock Capital Growth Management, an equity fund subsidiary of John Hancock Life Insurance Company, which he had headed. His life away from finance didn’t last long. Dawes spent the bulk of his retirement years volunteering on numerous boards, commissions and oversight committees and mentoring entrepreneurs.

As chairman and vice chairman on Palo Alto’s Utilities Advisory Commission, Dawes developed a 10-year efficiency plan that enabled the city to weather the energy crisis of 2001 as well as volatile changes in the gas market, including the bankruptcy of energy supplier Enron Company.

“The utilities department is a business within the city of Palo Alto,” said John Melton, 85, who served an overlapping term with Dawes on the commission from 2004 to 2015. “Business knowledge and savvy were one of the important ingredients for commissioners. Not everybody had to have that, but it happened that Dexter and I did.”

In a 2017 interview with the Palo Alto Weekly, Dawes attributed his success in the nonprofit sector to negotiating and good judgment — skills he acquired over his long career.

Dawes also was an early investor in Embarcadero Media, which publishes the Palo Alto Weekly, and served as a director of the company from 2000 to 2013.

“Dexter thought (Embarcadero Media) was an important contribution to the community,” said Jerry Elkind, who was one of the initial 15 shareholders when the company was founded in 1979 by Bill Johnson. “He really always had a very clear vision of what he thought at the time that it would be a good investment.”

As the internet became ubiquitous and rival papers entered the Peninsula, Dawes had no illusions about the threat they represented and was anxious to find ways to keep Embarcadero Media profitable and competitive.

One of Dawes’ top priorities, according to Elkind, was pushing the paper to an electronic format and getting it done “as early as possible.” He supported Johnson’s efforts in doing so, and Embarcadero Media became the first publishing company in the U.S. to post its entire editorial content on the web in 1994.

Dexter never failed to zero in on the key financial issues confronting the company at any given time and ask all the pertinent questions,” Johnson said. “His monitoring and analytical mind helped me to become a better leader, take risks and adapt to the changes taking place in the media world. And he never lost sight of our mission to inform the community with trusted reporting and analysis.”

Dawes was born on July 10, 1936, in Englewood, New Jersey, to Wetmore Dawes, an accountant, and Caroline Dawes, a homemaker.

He enrolled at Harvard College and came to Palo Alto on a blind date. After Kay’s graduation, they married and moved to Seattle where Tom received his master’s degree in physics at the University of Washington. He then became an officer in the Navy and was stationed on Whidbey Island, serving as a radar engineer. Tom was athletic and loved sports. He and Kay climbed numerous mountains in the Pacific Northwest. Eventually, Tom and Kay moved to Palo Alto where Tom worked as a Nuclear Physicist at Lockheed for 32 years. There, they raised their two children.

Tom was a highly intelligent, kind and loving man who had a memorable smile and a playful twinkle in his eye. An avid reader, he was a curious lifelong learner who shared his love of physics, astronomy, music and literature with his children and grandchildren. He also shared his love of nature with his kids, leading the Miller family on many memorable camping adventures in the West’s National Parks.

Tom loved Kay deeply and enjoyed spending time with her, as well as with his children and grandchildren. He is survived by his son Matthew and daughter Kathy as well as by his three lovely granddaughters, Elizabeth, Isabella and Adelene. He is also survived by his siblings, Laura Lee Peck, Freda Cobb and Fred Miller. There will be a private funeral service at a future date.

By Lloyd Lee

Gary Oliver Maffia, age 68, passed away peacefully on Tuesday April 6, 2021 while surrounded by family in Redding, California. Those who knew Gary will remember him for his larger than life personality, sense of humor and delicious food.

Growing up in Redwood City, Gary loved playing baseball and was an outstanding young athlete. After graduating from Sequoia High School, Gary discovered a passion in the culinary arts and pursued an education in European Cuisine. At the young age of 21, he opened Barbarossa European Restaurant in Atherton, CA as the chef and co-owner. For 25 years, local patrons celebrated Barbarossa as a regional favorite offering a fine dining experience. As the chef and owner, Gary received several prestigious awards including Mobile Four Stars and Chefs of America recognition in 1988. Although extremely busy, Gary always found time to coach his sons’ baseball teams for many years. He took coaching to the next level by organizing weekend campground, whiffle ball tournaments, and frequent backyard BBQs.

Later in his career, Gary opened an Olivio’s European Bistro in Belmont, CA where he served continental cuisine in a more casual atmosphere. Occasionally, you would find Gary mingling amidst the tables sharing old stories, jokes or a recipe. His gregarious nature, soul filled laugh, and engaging personality delighted friends and patrons over the years.

In 2011, Gary retired to the Mt Lassen foothills where he enjoyed golfing, fishing and sharing his recipes with family. He is survived by brother Ron (Dorene), sons Anthony (Brittany) and Michael (Vanessa), and grandchildren Mariana, Lucas, and Daniela.

To read full obituaries, visit PaloAltoOnline.com/Obits.

By Lloyd Lee

Gary O. Maffia
August 9, 1952 – April 6, 2021

Thomas Miller
November 22, 1930 – February 4, 2021

Thomas Miller, loving husband, father, brother and grandfather, passed away peacefully in his sleep on February 4th, 2021 in Palo Alto, California at the age of 90. Tom grew up in Barstow, California. After high school, he joined the Navy and was stationed in San Diego. An excellent student, he attended Stanford University where he studied Physics.

At Stanford, Tom met the love of his life, Kay Hamilton, on a blind date. After Kay’s graduation, they married and moved to Seattle where Tom received his master’s degree in Physics at the University of Washington. He then became an officer in the Navy and was stationed on Whidbey Island, serving as a radar engineer. Tom was athletic and loved nature. He and Kay climbed numerous mountains in the Pacific Northwest. Eventually, Tom and Kay moved to Palo Alto where Tom worked as a Nuclear Physicist at Lockheed for 32 years. There, they raised their two children.

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With spring in full swing, lots of us are getting out on bikes. Bike shops have been very busy, running low on inventory as we start to emerge from our pandemic bunkers. Adults and kids are trying new routes to work and school, while people looking to regain their fitness are seeking out new bike loops for exercise.

This is great for our fitness, for air quality and for the climate. But as our bike population grows, it’s more important than ever that we make our streets and intersections safe for bikers.

The California Office of Traffic Safety reports that in 2018 cyclists were involved in 99 accidents in Palo Alto in which someone was injured or killed. In 18 of those, the cyclist was under 15 years old. For Mountain View, a somewhat larger city, there were 53 reported accidents, including six that involved children. Menlo Park, a city about half the size of Palo Alto, had 31 cyclists involved in an accident, with five of those involving children on bikes.

The Office of Traffic Safety ranks all of our cities among the worst of comparably sized cities when it comes to accidents involving cyclists. This is in part because we have more cyclists. But it also suggests that, as our ranks of cyclists continue to grow, our numbers will get even worse unless we pay careful attention to road design. Our bike routes need to be safe routes, but today that is not always the case.

I consider myself very fortunate to have been able to commute by bike throughout my decades of working, but I occasionally thought that the most dangerous thing I did all week was bike to work. It was often dark, and I usually had to cross a busy road, whether it was U.S. Highway 101 or Foothill Expressway or El Camino Real. Although my bicycle was well lit and I had reflective outerwear, I had to watch carefully.

The other day I re- rode a route I used to take frequently along Rengstorff Avenue to 101. The bike lane on Rengstorff near Midfield Road was filled with cars parked outside of a recent housing development. At one point, I found it almost impossible to get past a large pickup truck parked in the bike lane without veering into the traffic lane. Even when there is some space, the danger of being “doored” with little room to veer out of the way looms large.

This same setup occurs on San Antonio Road near Leghorn Street. The bike lane heading west is filled with cars outside of The Greenhouse development. Palo Alto has added “sharrows” to the outside traffic lane, indicating that lane should be shared with bikes.

On San Antonio Road heading west, just before crossing U.S. Highway 101, a bike route sign does not make clear where cyclists are to go: right or straight. But I am not comfortable taking the lane in heavy and fast traffic with my little bicycle.

Both of these officially designated bike routes take riders over 101 — a sketchy journey. On Rengstorff, a bicycle lane goes past on and off ramps for 101. A standard merge sign gives no indication to cars that bicycles are present even though bicycles are common here as they head to Google’s campus. The bike route isn’t marked on the asphalt with especially visible paint, and it is easy for a driver to get careless, especially during low-light commuting hours.

For San Antonio, there is no bike lane marked at all, just a single overgrown sidewalk that bicycles (in both directions) are expected to use. Crosswalks at the 101 on- and off- ramps again have minimal signage and no noticeable paint. I have barely seen cars slow down or stop for these crossings.

San Antonio also has a particularly dangerous intersection at Charleston Road. Multiple lanes of traffic turn into a pedestrian/bike crossing. Cars can have difficulty seeing the crossing until they are on top of it. Signage is minimal (nothing up by the turn signal), there are no right-turn-only signals and no separate timing for those who are crossing.

This intersection is an accident waiting to happen. When I am starting into the crosswalk, it is not at all clear to me that the crosswalk is a safe place to be. Just before I wrote this, a large SUV turned right in front of me as I was heading into the crosswalk. We both had “go” signals.

Some routes that are not official bike routes are so dangerous that transportation planners should specifically caution cyclists against riding on them. Alma Street in Palo Alto is particularly problematic for biking, with no shoulders, few exits when heading south and speeding cars. Even though cycling on it is such a terrifying experience that you would probably not make the mistake of getting on it twice, every week there seems to be a new cyclist on it struggling to decide whether to jump in right behind a car or take over a lane until they can manage to escape by darting across lanes of traffic. With so many visitors and new arrivals in Palo Alto, we should be helping them to avoid the worst routes.

Palo Alto has many well-marked routes for bikes, as do our neighboring cities. There also are many safety gaps, ones that could prove injurious or even fatal. Our city governments want us to bike more, and residents and commuters are stepping up. Let’s maintain and foster that momentum by making sure that our streets are safe and easy to navigate for our growing bike population.

Sherry Listgarten

What do you think about keeping University and California avenues car-free?

Submit letters to the editor of up to 300 words to letters@paweekly.com. Submit guest opinions of 750 to 950 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, objectivity, 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 650-223-6526 or Editorial Director Jocelyn Dong at editor@paweekly.com.
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A new start for art at Stanford
Cantor Arts Center and the Anderson Collection reopen
By Sheryl Nonnenberg

A fter more than a year of a closure, Stanford University’s major art museums—Cantor Arts Center and the Anderson Collection at Stanford—are open again. A visit to campus reveals that, while some things have remained the same (the venerable Rodin sculpture collection, for example), there have been some significant changes at both museums since they last welcomed in-person visitors.

In addition to current health policies such as mask mandates, timed tickets and social distancing rules, perhaps the most notable difference can be found at the Cantor, which is now being led by two interim directors, Elizabeth Mitchell and Maude Brezinski.

Mitchell, who is the curator of prints, drawings and photographs, has worked at the museum since 2010. Brezinski is the executive director of development for the arts and has led capital campaigns and annual giving programs at the university for more than 20 years. She played a key role in fundraising efforts for the university’s arts district, which encompasses the two museums, the Bing Concert Hall and the McMurtry Building for Art and Art History.

They were appointed last fall after the departure of former director Susan Dackerman. A lengthy investigation, begun after an ex parte investigation, of the tenure at Stanford/Cantor and understand its goals in recent email interviews with this news organization.

When asked if the Cantor is emulating the administration model of numerous large museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, in having two directors—one with management background and one with curatorial expertise—Brezinski responded, “Cantor is using a similar model with the exception that we both closely align with one another in our areas of expertise. The advantage for this current arrangement is that both of us have a long tenure at Stanford/Cantor and understand its history.”

Mitchell noted, “It has been very useful for us each to tap into our different spheres of experience to connect with staff and work toward institutional goals.”

Both indicated that, in addition to their respective skills and experience, just having an extensive history at Stanford has been a major advantage.

“My Stanford colleagues have helped weigh in on a variety of issues from legal documents to instituting timed ticketing for the first time,” Brezinski said. “Also, knowing our donors and volunteers has been very rewarding, as they have been incredibly supportive and encouraging.”

Mitchell, who served on staff-led committees that addressed the work culture at the museum, noted, “These experiences have helped me thoroughly understand the challenges faced by the museum team in their daily work, and areas in which staff want the museum to grow and flourish.”

And how do they plan to address the issues raised last summer?

“We are working closely with the staff with goals of transparency, empowerment and open communications,” according to Brezinski. For Mitchell, that means talking regularly with staff “to understand what tools and information they need to be successful in their work, and we use that feedback to strengthen communication and collaboration across the museum.”

Neither would comment on the status of the search for a permanent new museum director but Matthew Tiews, interim senior associate director, said the museum “will launch a search for the next director of the Cantor Arts Center in the next few months.”

During the closure, the museums made considerable efforts to remain relevant via virtual offerings, including online exhibitions, tours and lectures. Jason Linetzky, director of the Anderson Collection, said, “The closure provided opportunities for the museums to develop digital content and tours and present virtual programs with contemporary artists, museum docents and Stanford Student Guides.” At the Cantor, according to Brezinski, the closure also allowed the staff to spend time planning for the future.

“Exhibition scheduling has also been robust and we will publicize future exhibitions soon. Our membership has been affected, but in comparison to our peers, we have maintained a very good base. Aside from the resignations that occurred last fall/early winter, the staff has remained very stable,” she said.

There have also been changes in the past few years for the Anderson Collection, mainly the deaths of founders Harry “Hunk” and Mary Margaret “Moo” Anderson. According to Linetzky, their passing has only strengthened the museum’s commitment to sharing the collection and expanding educational opportunities. Only the first floor of the Anderson is currently open, including the installation “Hostile Terrain 94” and “Formed and Fired: Contemporary American Ceramics,” while the permanent collection upstairs is packed for temporary storage. The entire museum will be closed again starting May 3 so that gallery ceilings can be resurfaced, the galleries repainted and the permanent collection reinstalled for an autumn reopening.

The temporary gallery on the lower level will then feature the acrylic and resin sculptures of Sam Richardson, who was a highly respected minimalist sculptor and professor of art at San Jose State University.

At the Cantor, among its selection of ongoing and temporary exhibitions, the special exhibition “When Home Won’t Let You Stay: Migration through Contemporary Art” is on view through May 31. Richard Serra’s sculpture Sequence and the Rodin Sculpture Garden are still available to those who prefer an outdoor encounter with art. Outdoor dining at Cool Cafe has not yet returned but, according to the museum’s website, will soon be announced.

All three museum directors are happy to be engaging with the public and encouraging in-person experiences with their collections again. When asked what she wants the community to know about visiting the museum, now and in the future, Brezinski replied, “We want them to feel that it is their second home — that they are welcomed, that they will see beautiful art and learn from our curators, program staff, faculty, docents and volunteers.”

The museums are currently open Wednesdays through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 25% capacity. Free, timed tickets are required. For more information about updated visitor guidelines and policies, go to the museum’s websites: museum.stanford.edu and anderson.stanford.edu.

Email Contributing Writer Sheryl Nonnenberg at nonnenberg@aol.com.
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New Peninsula Restaurant Week launches May 14

That restaurants have been hit particularly hard by pandemic-prompted economic fallout is no longer exactly breaking news. Nearly 1 in 6 restaurants nationwide — about 100,000 restaurants — have closed either permanently or long term since March 2020, according to the National Restaurant Association. The Peninsula itself has had to say goodbye to some greats, including Mayfield Bakery & Cafe, Ann’s Coffee Shop and Dan Gordon’s.

In an effort to provide diners more opportunities to support local restaurants, as the Peninsula slowly reopens, Embarcadero Media’s Peninsula Foodist is teaming up with Facebook to launch Peninsula Restaurant Week. From May 14-22, restaurants of all stripes along the Peninsula will offer prix fixe deals and other menu specials available for dine-in, delivery or curbside pickup as part of the new dining event.

For more information about Peninsula Restaurant Week, go to peninsulaRESTAURANTWEEK.com.

Restaurant Week interviews: 8 questions for Bushido’s Steven Yen

Longtime restaurant owner on the food industry, his new chef, and the light at the end of the (pandemic) tunnel

By Sarah Klearman

As part of Peninsula Restaurant Week, Embarcadero Media’s Peninsula Foodist has asked participating chefs and restaurant owners to share their stories about what the past year has been like for them and where they see the industry headed. This week’s Q&A features Steven Yen, owner of Bushido Izakaya Restaurant at 156 Castro St., Mountain View. This story has been edited for length and clarity.

Tell me a little bit about your restaurant. I understand you’ve been in business more than 10 years now.

It’s been a little over 11 years. I try not to count this past year as a year, just with everything that’s gone on. Last year was just survival.

We’re a Japanese izakaya-style restaurant. Izakaya is like tapas. In Japan, izakayas are essentially Japanese drinking houses, so a lot of people — many of whom live in small apartments in Japan — will go to izakayas after work and drink over long periods of time, like, three or four hours, and they just drink and eat tapas, small plates, and share. So that’s the general idea of an izakaya. In America, it’s a little different — we’re more of just a dinner restaurant, but that’s where the basis of the idea came from.

Tell me about the course of this year — how many times did you close and reopen?

That was the toughest part. The only thing I would ever ask the regulator during lockdowns is the hardest thing when there’s no income, right? But it was one of those things where it was always about weighing the health and safety of your family versus paying the bills. And it sucked that it had to be that choice. That was the toughest part.

Are there moments or experiences this year you’ve drawn upon to keep you going?

Oh, 100%. I’ve had regular customers who have come to Bushido ever since we opened. They first said it was supposed to be two weeks, right? But we just followed the rules. If they said serve to-go only, then we did to-go food only. We did close during the holidays — we did serve to-go only, then we did to-go food only. If they said come first, as does the health and safety of our community always comes first over the health and safety of my family. We closed again this winter, too. It’s honestly hard for me to recollect exactly, but we just followed the rules. If they said serve to-go only, then we did to-go food only. We did close during the holidays — we did a 10-day closure. We were allowed to stay open for to-go orders only, but cases were surging, so we just closed.

And does this latest reopening feel like it’ll be permanent?

I sure hope so. We’re going full speed ahead with hiring and everything as if we are going to continue to be open.

Tell me about the biggest challenges you’ve faced as a restaurant owner during Restaurant Week?

Obviously making rent and paying the bills is the hardest thing when there’s no income, right? But it was one of those things where it was always about weighing the health and safety of your family versus paying the bills. And it sucked that it had to be that choice. That was the toughest part.

Has the pandemic forced any kind of innovation or revelation in the restaurant space you’re excited about?

My restaurant is on Castro Street, and they actually closed the street to through traffic. So essentially we’re all able to put tables on the street. It’s actually really cool. It turns Castro into a walking street. And obviously additional seating is great, but it’s just a great environment. Hopefully, once the pandemic starts winding down, it’ll be even more of a (pedestrian) destination.

What should diners expect from Bushido during Peninsula Restaurant Week? I have a new chef, so I’m leaving it up to him to create the menu. He’s actually worked at a lot of Michelin-star restaurants; he’s worked at restaurants that are both Japanese and Korean.

Normally for these things you do some new dishes and some familiar. Because I have a new chef, though, I might just do all new dishes and get customer feedback.

Anything else customers should know about supporting local restaurants during Restaurant Week?

I think (supporting local restaurants) is the most important thing. Of course, we want everybody to do it safely, but I think we’re starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Email Writer Sarah Klearman at peninsulaFOODIST@EMBARCADERO.PUBLISHING.COM.
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AME Zion Church to serve as vaccination site

Palo Alto’s University AME Zion Church will be the location of a COVID-19 vaccination event on Saturday, April 24, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The walk-up site offers free vaccines and no identification is required, the Rev. Kaloma Smith said.

The church has partnered with Santa Clara County and San Jose-based Roots Community Health. The site will offer the Moderna vaccine and is open to anyone ages 18 and older.

“We are particularly focused on getting vaccinations for Black and brown people in the area. We have worked with the county to address some of the issues that people have faced getting vaccines,” Smith said in an email.

The vaccine clinic will take place at 3549 Middlefield Road in Palo Alto.

In addition to the AME Zion site, people ages 18 and older can get their first dose on Saturday, April 24, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Palo Alto Veterans Memorial Park. Recipients must live or work in East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks or Menlo Park’s Belle Haven/District 1 neighborhoods. ID required. People are asked to arrive in order of the first letter of their last name: A-C: 8-9 a.m.; D-H: 9-10:30 a.m.; J-L: 10:30-noon; M-P: 12:30-2 p.m.; Q-U: 2-3 p.m.; V-Z: 3-4 p.m.

— Sue Dremann

Outages (continued from page 5)

For a city that often touts the reliability of its municipal utilities and that is banking on electrification of cars and buildings to achieve its aggressive emission-reduction goals, the spate of outages has offered both a reality check and an opportunity for self-reflection and troubleshooting. This week, Batchelor published a post on the city’s Medium page, detailing the city’s plan to address the problems that the recent outages had exposed.

The plan includes conducting a third-party review of existing systems and procedures; an evaluation of the electrical system to identify any unexpected issues; and hiring additional system operators.

Batchelor also noted that the city is working to address the limitations of the call system, including adding more capacity to receive calls and ensuring that calls won’t get dropped.

“We are also working on ways to share and confirm an initial outage, in the hope of reducing customer calls into the Utilities phone system,” Batchelor wrote.

According to the Utilities Department, the city averages about 25 outages a year, with recent causes including downed tree branches, floating mylar balloons and, in one recent case, a goose that flew into a power line. The most significant outage in recent years occurred on Feb. 17, 2010, when a small plane attempting a liftoff in fog at Palo Alto Airport hit high-power lines and crashed into East Palo Alto. The three plane passengers died in the accident.

All 28,000 utility customers lost power for more than 10 hours, and the city damaged all three transmission lines that the city relies on to connect to the power grid.

Since then, utility staff have explored adding another transmission line. City staff spent years negotiating with Stanford University for an additional National Accelerator Laboratory but could not reach an agreement on interconnection. In February, utilities officials said that if the option was exhausted, it is looking to explore an interconnection between the city’s electric substation at Adobe Creek and PG&E’s Ames substation.

“Although this connection is at the same transmission voltage level as the city’s existing interconnection, and therefore does not offer a reduction in electric transmission costs, it does signal reliability, the capacity to dispatch energy, and resiliency,” the report states.

Reliable electricity is key to the council’s goal of reducing carbon emissions in the city by 100% by 2030, with 1990 as the baseline. According to a new study conducted by Utilities and Public Works staff, as well as the consulting firm AE- COM, reaching the goal would require a wholesale conversion of gas appliances to electrical ones in the city’s single-family homes as well as widespread adoption of electric vehicles.

At the April 9 meeting of the Utilities Advisory Commission, David Coale, a member of the group Carbon Free Palo Alto, urged city staff and commission- ers to reconsider their effort to pursue an interconnection and to instead spend their time and resources on local resiliency, which they believe is quite mastered.

“If we’re going to do electrification, the utility needs to go a lot further in making the system more robust that not just saying residents believe that electrification is going to be a good idea,” Coale said.

Frank Flynn, who lives on Matadero Avenue, alluded to the March 27 outage in a recent letter to the council, pointing out that the electric utility “appears to be the least reliable utility we have.” In the 30 years that he has lived in his home, Flynn wrote in the April 7 letter, he does not recall ever seeing his gas service go off.

“If we do want the user to switch to electric service, then our electric service has to be better,” Flynn wrote. “Otherwise residents will simply buy portable generators and such that are significantly worse for pollution. That (no good) reason that our electrical service cannot be more reliable, but it will never become more reliable unless we maintain our grid and every failure, and commit to fixing every issue,” Flynn wrote.

— Enviros Staff Writer Kenneth Gheyner at kgheyner@pawweekly.com.
Extensively Remodeled in Sought-After Midtown

650 Towle Place, Palo Alto
5 Bed | 2.5 Bath | 3,048 Sq Ft | 6,705 Sq Ft Lot

Located on a cul-de-sac in the desirable Midtown neighborhood, this home has been treasured by the same family for over 40 years and entirely remodeled for 21st century living. This traditional two-story home exudes Mediterranean flair with its red-tiled roof and adobe-style finish. Freshly-painted interiors incorporate a designer-selected palette with crisp white crown moldings. There are beautifully refinished oak floors throughout. The ambiance is bright and light with expansive windows. Sliding glass doors across the rear of the home open to a very private, low-maintenance yard.

Beyond the traditional formal rooms, the all-white updated kitchen features new and refaced cabinetry with quartz counters, dedicated space for casual dining, and all new stainless steel appliances. An inviting family room just off the kitchen is perfect for everyday living. Upstairs, there are five spacious bedrooms and two remodeled bathrooms; the primary suite includes a sizable walk-in closet and extra-large shower. Rounding out the appeal of this classic home is its location just two blocks from Hoover Park and Midtown shops and restaurants, and access to acclaimed Palo Alto schools. Welcome home!

Features:

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- Double front doors, with inset glass panes, open to a traditional foyer that introduces the freshly painted interiors and refinished hardwood floors that extend throughout
- The upstairs primary bedroom suite features a cedar-floored walk-in closet and remodeled en suite bathroom with quartz counters, a dual-sink and a make-up vanity, plus a large porcelain tiled shower with bench seating
- Four additional upstairs bedrooms, each with ceiling light, crown molding, and large closet, are served by a remodeled bath with dual-sink quartz vanity and separate room with tub and overhead shower
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Graduations
(continued from page 5)

anywhere from a third to more than half capacity at each location depending on whether Santa Clara County moves out of the orange tier and into the least restrictive yellow tier.

The football fields will be used as main seating areas, and benches could hold any overflow for the families of the approximately 500 graduating seniors at each high school.

Austin said the district’s ability to seat family members of each graduate within their own “pod,” while keeping every family or group of attendees 6 feet apart per county health guidelines, was a big game changer that prompted the district to move forward with in-person ceremonies.

Utilizing both the field and benches for the audience will allow the family of each graduate to be properly distanced from others, he said.

As schools across the county expand attendance for in-person learning, Palo Alto Unified’s decision to bring back the traditional ceremony marks yet another milestone in the push to return to normal for students.

For last year’s rite of passage, both district high schools, along with Palo Alto’s private Castilleja and Kehillah Jewish High schools, opted for a car parade around town, during which seniors waved from their cars to cheering friends, teachers, families and community members. At the time, the county had rolled back restrictions just enough to allow for the drive-by celebrations.

“Palo Alto was a leader in lobbying the county to allow the graduation parade,” Austin said.

While in-person graduation ceremonies appear to be happening, not all traditional events are set to make a comeback at the district this year. Prom, for example, remains a subject of discussion, Austin said.

At Tuesday’s school board meeting, Austin clarified that the principals and district administrators would be talking on Thursday (April 22) about end-of-year events. He urged patience on the part of families and students.

“Outdoor gatherings are still capped at 50 individuals, so we’re not sure where some of these activities are going to fit in,” he said, referring to the state’s guidelines for outdoor gatherings under the orange tier. (Those same guidelines allow for “private” outdoor gatherings to have up to 300 guests if all tests are negative for the coronavirus or have been fully vaccinated.)

The superintendent also dismissed comparisons from some community members to other neighboring districts that have announced prom plans for the semester. In a call with an unnamed superintendent, Austin said that the other district’s end-of-year event is hardly an actual prom.

“It’s listed as prom, (but) it is not a prom,” he said. “It’s a bunch of tables out on a field with some activities.”

Austin said graduation remains a top priority.

“To be able to tell our graduates that they’re going to get to graduate in a stadium in a way that resembles a traditional graduation is exciting for us,” he said. “It’s been a year and a half of loss and disappointment, and we’re excited to be able to preserve some piece of normalcy for the conclusion of their senior year.”
let one or two restaurants have the entire street, everyone else is kind of hung out to dry," Fischer said.

The council, for its part, has no plans to abandon the street closures any time soon. After weighing both sides, council members authorized staff to keep both streets car-free until Oct. 31 — effectively extending programs that would otherwise expire on May 31.

They also discussed parklets — converted on-street parking spaces that serve as outdoor dining space in front of restaurants. The council favored extending the parklets program, which was adopted on an emergency basis and was set to expire on Sept. 7, until the end of the year and to move ahead with plans for a permanent parklet program.

In debating the merits of the street closures, council members tried to balance the often-competing needs of the restaurant owners and merchants in the two areas. While the California Avenue closure has been largely accepted by the business owners (with the notable exception of Mollie Stone’s), keeping cars off University Avenue has been a more contentious proposition, with most restaurants favoring it but many retailers suggesting that the move is hurting their business.

Mayor Tom DuBois and council member Lydia Kou both voted against authorizing the extension of the street closures and the parklet programs, with each suggesting that the city needs to tread cautiously before locking any program in place for the long term. For the same reason, both also voted against exploring a permanent parklet program — a move that was proposed by council member Alison Cormack.

“‘It’s only fair, now that they are allowed to be open, that they be given the opportunity to succeed as well,' Kou said, referring to downtown retailers. ‘So it distresses me that a lot of emphasis has been put into restaurants only and they’re given so much leeway.

“The least that we can do is ensure fairness and ensure visibility for these businesses and ensure that (they’re) easy to get to,” she said.

While their colleagues agreed that the city can do more to support retailers, they concluded that the street closures are doing far more good than harm. Vice Mayor Pat Burt suggested adding Mollie Stone’s by adding signage on El Camino Real directing visitors to the supermarket through the Camino Real entrance. He also recommended further levying up the new pedestrian thoroughfares by encouraging and promoting musical acts at public plazas.

“We have lacked a lot of what had been our cultural richness with performing arts and visual arts that we used to have in this community,” Burt said. “With the gentrification, it had gone by the wayside and this is an opportunity to resurrect it.”

In supporting the extension of the street closures, Cormack underscored that the city is not committing to keeping the two avenues car-free; it is merely giving city staff the authority to retain the current setup for a longer period of time. Because these programs were launched under emergency ordinances, which would become null once the public health emergency is declared over, the council will likely need to make further modifications — as well as approve permanent ordinances — to extend the street closures on a more long-term basis.

“If things go poorly and the variants come, we have the ability to maintain the situation we have now, which I think is fairly tolerable by most people,” Cormack said. “Wonderful for some people but difficult for others.

“If things go incredibly well and people come roaring back and University needs to be reopened, the city manager has the ability to do that,” she said.

In addition to voting 5-2 to authorize the extension of the various outdoor dining programs, the council also directed staff by a 6-1 vote, with council member Eric Filseth dissenting, to pursue additional measures to support businesses that are negatively impacted by the current programs and to ensure that the construction projects in the California Avenue and in the downtown area are coordinated to minimize the impact of street closures.

Council members also considered conducting a survey of businesses to gauge their opinions on street closures but backed off after City Manager Ed Shikada warned that this would take a long time and significant staff resources. “It is pulling teeth to get businesses to weigh in on this issue because they’re voting against their neighbors,” Shikada said.
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Elegantly maintained reimagined Eichler completely rebuilt in 1973 designed by architect Lawrence Steiner. Exquisite craftsmanship with luxurious Redwood interior and exterior, high ceilings, and an abundance of natural light. Cohesive layout strategy has thoughtful storage capability, hidden wine cellar, and peaceful garden tableau from every sliding glass door. Modernized kitchen with luxury pull-outs, high-end appliances, and unique pantry. Eastern inspired elements throughout include Shoji Screens in bedrooms, and copper lined flower shelf. Luxurious bathrooms with frameless glass doors and Polished Nickel-Plated Hammered Copper Sinks. Office guest room combo with custom Cherry cabinetry and Murphy Queen sized bed. Fairy-tale garden boasts Giannini Huntington fountain, luscious landscaping with massive established orchids, & healthy lawn. Dream Silicon Valley location near Greer Park, Palo Alto Schools, Stanford University, Silicon Valley Tech companies, Oregon Expwy, and HWY 101.

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Homework (continued from page 10)

night, while 72% out of the 1,700 Palo Alto High School student respondents said they were assigned that same amount.

The results suggested that the district is getting closer to complying with the homework policies that it adopted in 2012, around the time parents and faculty were scouring for ways to support their children's mental health following a suicide cluster that took the lives of six teenagers.

The survey, however, didn’t categorize results by specific grade level nor ask if students were taking more advanced courses — two factors that determine how many hours of homework high school students will get. So it’s not immediately clear how well the high schools are meeting or missing their more specific guidelines.

According to regulations, for example, freshmen should expect 1.4 hours of work per weeknight, while seniors should expect two. (Weekend homework is mostly voluntary unless “deemed necessary.”)

As Dauber noted during the meeting, the district also allows for Advanced Placement, honors meeting, the district also allows accelerated courses to assign for Advanced Placement, honors.

“T’d love to see adherence to the homework policy by the end of next year,” Dauber said as he asked Ofek if the district will outline more concrete steps and timelines to comply with the policy.

Moving forward, the board agreed that it would be ideal to outline specific “best practices” to help teachers adhere to homework policies, which will also be addressed in the next school year’s Secondary School Pans for Student Achievement.

Ofek said secondary school principals received the data this past spring break and are working out additional goals, including concrete timelines.

Board member Jesse Ladomirak added that she wants to see more quantitative data around what “too much” homework exactly means. For example, teachers could post how long their homework should take as students record how long it actually takes to complete, Ladomirak said.

When asked by board member Todd Collins why the district is having trouble following its own policies. Superintendent Don Austin agreed with the sentiment and said that following the homework policy should start being reflected in site principal and teacher evaluations.

“There is no sense in having the same conversation, looking at the same data, over and over again, without changing the approach,” Austin said.

Email Editorial Assistant Lloyd Lee at lle@paweekly.com.

Answers on page 36.

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