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Redwood 'snapped at the base like a stalk of asparagus'

By CHRIS COUNTS

A SERIES of storms packing a mighty punch pounded the Big Sur coast last week, causing traffic delays, intermittent power outages and property damage.

Highway 1 was closed Sunday night after a slide covered the pavement near Rain Rocks, just a short distance away from an ambitious Caltrans project to reduce the impact of slides on motorists. The road was cleared and reopened the next morning.

The staff at the Henry Miller Library received a scare Monday morning when a huge redwood tree came crashing down in its garden. Library assistant Mike Scutari saw it fall — about five minutes after a library volunteer moved her car from its path.

Nobody was hurt, but the tree “snapped at the base like a stalk of asparagus,” Scutari told *The Pine Cone*.

“It took out part of the fence, one of our terracotta sculptures, the entire PG&E power pole and not much else,” reported Magnus Toren, the library’s executive director. “The tree fell with almost surgical precision to minimize damage.”

Toren estimated the tree was about 200 feet tall.

The library brought in local tree wizard Tracy Chesebrough to help remove part of the redwood, while PG&E began working on installing a new pole. On the bright side, Toren noted that “there will be some usable wood.” On the library’s Facebook site, Monterey County Planning Commissioner Keith Vandevere made the same observation, suggesting the redwood could provide “plenty



PHOTO/KODIAK GREENWOOD

A mammoth redwood at the Henry Miller Library caused surprisingly little damage when it fell Dec. 3. A fence was destroyed, but now there’s plenty of redwood to fix it. Posing with the tree are Tracy Chesebrough (left), Julia Stoddard, Mike Scutari, Mary Lu Toren and library director Magnus Toren.

of material for a new fence.”

While it’s doubtful the fence will be repaired with wood from the tree, Toren told *The Pine Cone* he hopes to use some of it create shelving for a collection of Big Sur natural and cultural books. The collection will be named after

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Council can’t discuss Flanders lease option

■ Must wait until latest EIR is finished

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER BEING told they could not even discuss the possibility of leasing Flanders Mansion until the latest version of the environmental impact report on the future of the historic house is finished next year, Carmel City Council members unanimously voted Tuesday to authorize city administrator Jason Stilwell to seek expert advice about what to do with a property that’s been the center of debate for four decades.

The discussion arose at the Dec. 4 meeting after council members fielded several proposals in closed sessions earlier this year from people expressing interest in leasing the historic Tudor-style mansion and renovating it themselves — either because they think they could deduct the renovation costs from their income taxes, or because they would live in the house rent-free.

For most of the past decade, the council has focused on trying to sell the house — an action supported by a strong majority of voters in November 2009 — but the effort has been stymied by two lawsuits filed by the Flanders Foundation.

At the meeting, city attorney Don Freeman cautioned the council against discussing the merits of a lease vs. a sale until after the final environmental impact report has been certified. According to a timeline submitted by consultant Denise

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Businesses petition CPUC for larger desal plant

By KELLY NIX

A COALITION of local hotels, restaurants and other business interests contends the desal plant proposed to supply the Monterey Peninsula with water should be much larger to support the hospitality industry, make it possible to build on existing lots of record and generally make the Peninsula a better place to live.

In a Nov. 9 letter to the California Public Utilities Commission, the Coalition of Peninsula Businesses requests that the CPUC study the possibility of an alternate, larger desal plant to the facility California American Water proposes in North Marina.

“In order for [Cal Am] to adequately serve its customers, CPB strongly recommends that a significantly larger desalination plant be added to the project alternatives to be studied in the EIR,” according to the letter to the CPUC.

As proposed, Cal Am’s desal project would supply only enough to replace water being illegally taken from the Carmel River without providing any for lots of record, infill, business expansions or home remodels, something the business coalition wants to change.

The coalition’s bid is contrary to a request from development-wary group LandWatch Monterey County, which earlier

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AFRP faces mounting vet bills for shepherd

■ Severe wounds hidden under fur

By KELLY NIX

WHEN TWO-YEAR-OLD miniature Australian shepherd Herbie was rescued from a Stockton animal shelter last month by a volunteer with Pacific Grove-based Animal Friends Rescue Project, the dog’s fur was matted, and he stunk.

But unbeknownst to the Stockton shelter and the volunteer who rescued him, Herbie had wounds below his thick coat so terrible there was a question whether he would live another day.

The AFRP regularly rescues dogs from other shelters that are at risk of being euthanized.

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PHOTO/COURTESY AFRP

Aussie shepherd Herbie, shown recovering after surgery, had horrible gashes hidden under his fur that were discovered by veterinarians. The AFRP needs help paying his vet bills.

City’s pension bonds get A+ from investors

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY’S pension obligation bonds to pay off more than \$6 million in retirement debt hit the market for 90 minutes Nov. 29, with buyers from across the country competing to purchase them. The bonds are refinancing a loan from the State of California that carries an interest rate of 7.5 percent.

“With our price adjustments, we estimate the total refinancing will be 2.94 percent,” including the costs of issuing the bonds, city administrator Jason Stilwell told the city council via email shortly after the sale last week. “Total gross savings would be \$4.2 million.”

Buyers were from California and across the country, with bids from the County of Solano, a Los Angeles credit union, a San Francisco Bay Area bank, a Florida city, a Minnesota city, retailers and a money manager in Seattle, according to Stilwell.

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FPPC says North Salinas Valley Fund group broke law

By KELLY NIX

THE GROUP that was Monterey County supervisor candidate Marc Del Piero’s main financial supporter broke state law when it failed to disclose \$95,000 in contributions to him and two other candidates this year, according to a state agency that investigates violations of the Political Reform Act.

At a meeting Dec. 13 in San Diego, the California Fair Political Practices Commission will consider whether the North Salinas Valley Fund for Responsible Growth should be fined for not filing a campaign statement disclosing contributions of \$45,000 to Del Piero, \$35,000 to 4th District Supervisor Jane Parker and \$15,000 to Ed Mitchell, who plans to challenge Lou Calcagno for the 2nd District county supervisor spot in 2014.

The three contributions were made March 20.

The North Salinas group, considered by the FPPC to be a

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