

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Commissioners favor Flanders lease

By MARY SCHLEY

**SIDING WITH** preservationists, members of the planning commission voted 3-1 this week that leasing Flanders Mansion for residential use, rather than selling it, would result in the least damage to the environment and Mission Trail park.

The mansion, acquired by the city in 1972 and the subject of debate ever since, sits on the edge of Mission Trail Nature Preserve. The city has been making a concerted effort to sell the mansion for nearly a decade but has been twice thwarted by lawsuits filed by the Flanders Foundation. Most recently, a state appellate court upheld a Monterey County Superior Court judge's decision that part of the EIR was inadequate — a ruling that invalidated a November 2009 vote by a strong majority of Carmel residents to sell the house, which was built in the 1920s.

Working for the city on contract, former principal planner Brian Roseth told commissioners the EIR had been revised to address the court's concerns that one alternative — selling the mansion on a smaller parcel of land — had not been adequately discussed. He

Planning commissioners will tell the city council that leasing Flanders Mansion is more environmentally friendly than selling it.

PHOTO/MARY SCHLEY



advised the commission to consider whether the EIR was sufficient and said members could also recommend the best options for dealing with Flanders.

There was little debate over whether the new EIR was adequate, and the commission voted 4-0 to recommend that the council certify it. Commissioner Jan Reimers was absent.

### What to do now?

Roseth also asked the commission to consider which of the prospects for Flanders explored in the EIR — selling it on

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## Burnett wants public financing for desal plant

### Millions in savings, he says

By KELLY NIX

**SAN FRANCISCO —** CARMEL MAYOR Jason Burnett this week outlined details of a plan for public financing of California American Water's proposed desalination plant to save interest expense and keep water bills from going up any more than necessary.

At a California Public Utilities Commission cost workshop in San Francisco Wednesday, Burnett said the plan would entail the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District borrowing millions of dollars for the project and then repaying the money through a surcharge placed on customers' bills.

Because interest paid by public entities can be tax-free to the lender, it usually carries lower interest rates.

"The lower the overall cost of the facility, the better," Burnett said at the workshop, which ran from Tuesday through Thursday. "Most everyone would agree with this."

He said lower interest rates could mean tens of millions of dollars shaved off the desal project.

"The more public contributions we can put in," Burnett told *The Pine Cone*, "the more money we save for our ratepayers and constituents."

He said Cal Am will probably want to finance the desal plant on its own, since it can make a profit through a private financing scheme, "but we are in negotiations with them, and

See **FINANCING** page 11A

## Mayor, family on way to White House party

CARMEL MAYOR Jason Burnett and his wife will celebrate Christmas early when they attend a party at the most well known home in America — the White House.

President Barack Obama and family are hosting the exclusive party, which will likely be extravagant.

"I'm going to the White House tomorrow to go for some briefings and to work on some transportation issues," Burnett told *The Pine Cone* Thursday. "The party is tomorrow night. We are going to stay through the week."

Burnett said he's excited and honored by the invitation, the first time he's had the offer. He and his wife, Mel, will attend the party, which will also include many other elected officials.

But the Burnetts' 1-year-old son won't take part in the presidential festivities.

"Sebastian will be with the babysitter," Burnett said.

## LAST-MINUTE CHANGE IN CARMEL VALLEY ENVIRONMENTALIST'S WILL RAISES EYEBROWS

By CHRIS COUNTS

**A FORMER** chairman of the local Sierra Club told *The Pine Cone* this week that two Carmel Valley nonprofits used "schoolyard bullying tactics" to get more than \$200,000 from the estate of one time Big Sur Land Trust President Rod Mills and his wife, Ann.

Called a "great soldier" for his role in the local conservation community, Mills died March 28 at age 86. His wife, Ann, died five months earlier.

Don Gruber, a Monterey real estate broker who served as the chair of the Sierra Club's Ventana chapter in the mid-1990s, filed an objection in Superior Court Oct. 25 to a settlement distributing the Mills' estate. Specifically, he questioned the validity of a Feb. 16 document which purportedly amended the Mills' will and left 60 percent of their estate to

a pair of nonprofits, the Carmel Valley Trail and Saddle Club and the Carmel Valley Forum. The two groups later agreed to a settlement where they will split 17 percent of the estate, which Gruber estimated is worth about \$1.2 million.

### Mystery document

Before she died, Rod and Ann Mills set up a trust which left the lion's share of their lifelong assets to the Big Sur Land Trust, the SPCA of Monterey County and Bat Conservation International.

After Ann died, Gruber said that because of his longtime friendship with Rod Mills, he took on a more active role in Mills' life — in part because Mills himself was in poor health, mentally and physically.

In addition to undergoing chemotherapy for cancer, Mills was "frequently in a state of befuddlement, of faulty memory, and was for long periods overwhelmingly distressed by his own rapidly deteriorating health," Gruber explained,

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## Locals bummed about Ventana plan to sell Big Sur surf tours

By CHRIS COUNTS

**VENTANA INN** is offering its Big Sur guests "a surfing experience you'll never forget." But several Monterey Peninsula surfers told *The Pine Cone* they wish Ventana would simply forget about the idea.

In addition to providing accommodations for two for two nights and various amenities, Ventana's "Billabong Big Wave Excursion" includes surf lessons and discounts on Billabong surf apparel. The package sells for \$2,010.

But Monterey surfer Bryan Flores — who works as an assistant to 5th District Supervisor Dave Potter — said that Big Sur's dangerous surfing conditions and

See **SURFERS** page 16A

## Salinas elementary school named for murderer

### Superintendent calls Tiburcio Vasquez a 'revolutionary'

By KELLY NIX

**THE DECISION** to name a new elementary school in Salinas after a bandit many historians say terrorized Central and Southern California was defended this week by the school district's superintendent.

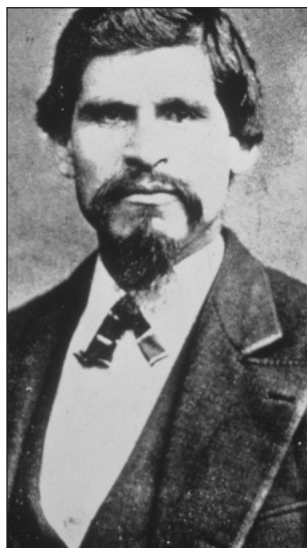
Last week, the Alisal Union School District board voted 5-0 to name a school on Tuscany Boulevard in East Salinas after Tiburcio Vasquez, a colorful figure largely associated with robbing stage coaches, stealing horses and killing people who got in his way.

But Alisal Union superintendent John

Ramirez said he regards Vasquez as a freedom fighter who merely opposed the social injustices done to Mexican Americans after California joined the United States in 1850. And Ramirez said that's exactly what he would tell students at the new school if they inquire about Vasquez.

"I would say he was a revolutionary, and we admire people who fought against the injustices of our people," Ramirez told *The Pine Cone*, referring to Hispanics. "And now we have the opportunity to give them respect for challenging the system."

Vasquez, whose house on Dutra Street in Monterey is designated a historic building, is a controversial figure. While he's been called California's most notorious bandit gang leader, and was convicted of murdering two



Tiburcio Vasquez

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