

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Robbery suspect caught but Rolex still missing

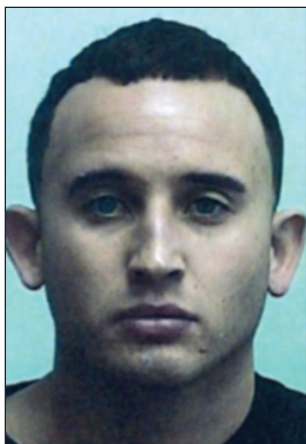
By KELLY NIX

A MAN police say stole a \$20,000 Rolex from a jewelry store on Lincoln Street was arrested over the weekend in San Benito County, but the pricey timepiece hasn't been recovered.

James Henrard, 24, was taken into custody by Carmel police officers and San Benito County Sheriff's deputies after they served a search warrant at his home in San Juan Bautista, Carmel police said.

Henrard is the primary suspect in the Dec. 15 robbery at

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Police say James Henrard of San Juan Bautista (right) is the man shown on security video (left) stealing a \$20K watch from a downtown jewelry store Dec. 15. They arrested Henrard Saturday.

## County wants Collins to pay its legal bills

By KELLY NIX

MONTEREY COUNTY is seeking nearly \$40,000 in legal bills from former county water director Steve Collins for defending itself from a \$25 million defamation lawsuit he filed against county officials but lost in September.

On Dec. 13, the county filed a reimbursement request in Monterey County Superior Court for \$39,732.38 for legal bills stemming from Collins' suit against the county.

"I think it's a further attempt by the county to intimidate

See **COLLINS** page 8A

## 32 households isolated by Big Sur slide

By CHRIS COUNTS

A SERIES of storms that soaked the Monterey Peninsula this week caused havoc along the Big Sur coast, temporarily closing Highway 1, stranding motorists, and turning one neighborhood into a virtual island.

The worst damage along the coast occurred Sunday afternoon just north of Partington Creek, where a rock slide dumped massive boulders on the highway and took out part of a private road leading to a Partington Ridge neighborhood where about 100 people live.

The slide happened about 32 miles south of Carmel and about five miles south of Big Sur Valley, where most of Big Sur's accommodations and restaurants are located.

For the first time in four days, motorists traveling along Highway 1 were permitted Dec. 27 to drive through the slide area as one lane was opened. But for the residents of Partington Ridge — who live in one of the most slide-prone neighborhoods imaginable — it's unclear when they'll be able to use their private road again, in large part because a chunk of it just landed on the highway.

### A walk on the wild slide

Repairing Partington Ridge Road won't be easy. The road provides the only automobile

access to more than 30 households ranging in elevation from 400 feet to 2,100 feet, but it's unclear how stable the hillside supporting it is. A large rocky outcropping looms above the

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PHOTO/JESS WHITNEY

Big Sur residents carry supplies past a rock slide this week near Partington Ridge. The slide closed a section of Highway 1 to motorists for four days before a lane was opened Dec. 27.

## JUDGE UPHOLDS WATER DISTRICT FIXTURE COUNTS

By KELLY NIX

A JUDGE has ruled against a Pebble Beach couple who filed a lawsuit against the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District challenging its daily practices of limiting residents' water use.

In a 12-page decision Dec. 20, Monterey County Superior Court Judge Lydia Villarreal sided with the water district over a lawsuit Sharlene and Richard Thum filed in August 2011 contending the district, among other things, illegally restricted water use and violated their rights to privacy.

"I am pleased Judge Villarreal validated our processes, in full, after a careful and thorough review," water district general manager Dave Stoldt said. "This important decision not only finds water district fees to be valid, but also affirms our mandate to provide and conserve water."

But Richard Thum called the decision a "travesty" and said the water district's rules "do nothing to promote the district's main purpose of securing a new water supply."

The Thums' attorney, Margaret Thum, Richard's sister, told The Pine Cone they are considering appealing the case and said the judge's decision "did not address significant legal issues." Villarreal issued her decision following a brief court trial in November. Attorney Alexander Henson, a former member of the water board, also represented the couple.

### 'Illegal' shower heads

The case stems from two shower heads discovered in the Thums' house during an inspection by a water district employee in 2009. The couple contend the inspection amounted to invasion of privacy and unreasonable government search. The Thums also believe the district's rules violate due process, are arbitrary, and fail to advance legitimate governmental interests.

Villarreal didn't agree, saying her decision that the water district "has broad express and implied powers to provide and

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## Multimillion-dollar properties sell like hotcakes as capital gains tax increase looms

By PAUL MILLER

IF YOU owned a vacant piece of land overlooking Pt. Lobos and Carmel River State Beach that was worth more than \$6 million, and the capital gains tax was about

to increase almost 50 percent, would you sell it? How about a downtown Monterey Hotel worth \$14 million? Or a massive vineyard in the Salinas Valley worth \$65 million?

With significant increases in federal income taxes taking effect Tuesday, the

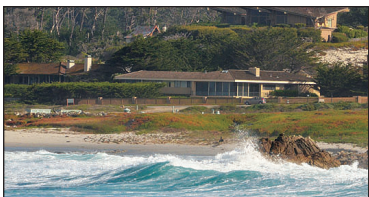
answer for the owners of those properties, and many others around the Monterey Peninsula is, "Definitely."

In the two weeks ending Dec. 22, escrows closed on 26 properties for prices above \$1 million, county records show. Fourteen of

those went for more than \$2 million, and three sold for more than \$5 million.

The end-of-the-year surge has been underway for several weeks, local real estate

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Among the properties closing escrow in the last two weeks are a \$3 million home overlooking Bird Rock in Pebble Beach (above), a \$6.4 million vacant lot next to Carmel River State Beach (right), a \$14.6 million downtown Monterey hotel, and a \$65.5 million vineyard near King City (far right).

