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Council seeks dream tenant for Flanders

By MARY SCHLEY

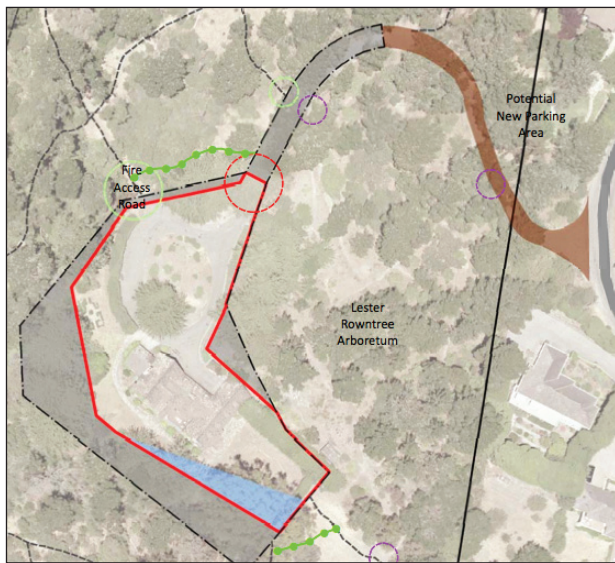
IF IT can find someone with a lot of cash and a desire to renovate — but not own — a beautiful but deteriorating 90-year-old house on the edge of a public park, the city won't sell Flanders Mansion, according to a unanimous vote by the Carmel City Council late Tuesday. But if a viable lease isn't in the works by the end of April, the city will take steps to put the historic home on the market.

According to the motion mostly crafted by city councilman Ken Talmage, the lessee would also have to restore the mansion according to historic standards in a timely manner and then maintain it in that condition until the conclusion of a lease with a long, but unspecified, term. The tenant would pay market rent but receive some sort of offset for



PHOTO/MARY SCHLEY

City officials (above) toured the Flanders Mansion property Tuesday before deciding to lease it rather than sell it. They also opted for a smaller parcel (red line at left) rather than the 1.252 acres (black dashed line) originally proposed.



improvements. A 2009 study estimated renovation costs at nearly \$1.2 million.

Furthermore, the person would pay for maintenance, upkeep and other expenses; defend the city in any subsequent legal fights over Flanders and carry liability insurance; and agree to follow numerous mitigation measures designed to offset the environmental impacts of using the house as a private residence rather than having it and its grounds available to the public. The mansion's private grounds would be .83 acres and include a .07-acre conservation easement.

The motion came at the conclusion of an hours-long hearing in which council members first voted to find the

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Burnett wants to tap underground water

■ Hopes city can receive credit for reducing amount drawn from river

By KELLY NIX

WITH NO water from Cal Am available for new projects, residential remodels or business expansions — and none likely to be available anytime soon — Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett is calling for the city to tap what is believed to be substantial underground water resources within the city limits for landscaping and other non-potable uses.

Among its top goals for the year, he wants the city council to look into tapping the city's own water supplies, including shallow water-bearing rock formations and underground springs.

"You could add up all these sources and have a couple of dozen acre-feet of water to use," Burnett told The Pine Cone this week.

The idea is that by developing these small water sources, the city might not only be able to keep its open spaces green and provide water for use on private gardens, it might also be eligible to receive precious water credits for drinking water, which mostly comes from the Carmel River and has been sharply curtailed because of environmental restrictions.

The council Tuesday voted to pursue eight initiatives this year, including maintaining "a leadership role in developing a long-term solution to the region's water supply while continuing to pursue a replacement and replenishment regional

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Commission: Event center a good idea but needs more study

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY sorely lacks venues for events serving 100 to 200 people, according to business owners, hoteliers and members of the public who spoke to the Carmel Planning Commission Wednesday. They encouraged commissioners to support a proposal to turn the old bank building at Dolores and Seventh into such a center.

Their arguments hit home, with the commission voting 3-0 to recommend the city council consider a proposal by owner Jeffrey Peterson to use the two buildings on the 16,000-square-foot property for meetings, conferences, wedding receptions, cooking demonstrations, classes, and some retail-oriented events. Peterson, managing partner of the LLC that bought the property in August 2011 after a proposal by John Mandurrigo to turn it into condos was rejected, also plans to enlarge the bathrooms and construct a full commercial kitchen inside, but the exterior of the modern-style structure won't change. The occupancy is 200 people.

"The purpose of this meeting is to review the proposed use at a conceptual level and provide direction to the applicant," associate planner Marc Wiener said in his report for the commission. "The commission should determine whether the proposal is consistent with the general plan and permitted by the zoning code."

Fred Kern, who developed the concept with Kristy Downing, presented the concept to the commission Jan. 9, describing a setup in which clients would rent the space to throw their events. He said attorney Tony

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PUC draws crowd supporting gov't-owned utilities

■ Cal Am proposes bigger desal plant

By KELLY NIX

WHILE THE California Public Utilities Commission continues its review of California American Water's latest water supply project, many of those who packed a public hearing at Monterey City Hall Wednesday made it clear that

they want the government to own and operate any new water project.

The hearing, sponsored by the PUC and moderated by administrative law judge Seaneen Wilson, was held to solicit comment on Cal Am's latest proposal, which includes a desal plant in North Marina, a wastewater treatment component and water storage facilities.

Cal Am estimates the Peninsula's water demand is 15,296 acre-feet per year, and company vice president of engineering Richard Svindland outlined its proposal to build the desal plant slightly larger to provide water for lots of record and what he called "tourism bounce back" when the economy recovers. The larger plant would cost \$17 million more.

"We now propose making the plant a little bit larger," Svindland said Wednesday afternoon.

After Svindland spoke, however, those who wanted to give the private utility company a piece of their mind, did. Many took the chance to blast Cal Am for the cost of the desal plant and urged public ownership of the facility.

The meeting was so crowded that the city's fire marshal issued a warning relayed by Wilson that the more than two dozen people who were standing had to find a place to sit on the crowded chamber benches. A second meeting held at 7 p.m. drew fewer people.

Several speakers in the afternoon rejected Cal Am's proposal of collecting a \$99 million surcharge from ratepayers over the next several years to help fund the project. The company also proposes seeking low interest loans for the plant.

"If the project should fail, it would be the ratepayers' money that would be lost, rather than Cal Am's money that would be lost," Tom MacDonald said. "Cal Am should be providing the capital to build any desal plant."

Others, including Linda Agerbak had similar views on

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Teen drinking leads to call for anti-party law

By MARY SCHLEY

AN OUT-OF-CONTROL party that landed one teen in the hospital for alcohol poisoning and raised concerns another might have been sexually assaulted while passed out has led to calls for a city law making it a crime to host a party where underage drinking occurs. The city council could consider a draft ordinance within the next month or two, Mayor Jason Burnett said at Tuesday night's council meeting.

Heath Rocha, a Carmel Unified School District director who oversees the district's drug and alcohol prevention efforts, told the council Jan. 8 that Carmel High School students "use and abuse drugs and alcohol at an alarming rate," exceeding that of their counterparts in Pacific Grove, Monterey County and statewide.

To help combat that abuse by getting parents and the community more involved in preventing their children from

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