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'Digester' to make good use of uneaten food

By KELLY NIX

DISCARDED BITS of steak, stale bread and rotten eggs will soon be put to good use, thanks to a new facility in Marina that transforms organic waste into compost for fertilizer and methane gas, which can be converted to elec-

A \$2 million "dry anaerobic digestion" plant at the Monterey Regional Waste Management District's landfill will convert restaurants' food waste and garden clippings from businesses into biogas, which will be used to power and heat the nearby Monterey waste treatment plant.

The facility will also produce compost for county agricultural growers, reduce greenhouse gases and odor, and limit the amount of organic waste that would otherwise go into the landfill, according to Jeff Lindenthal with the waste management district.

"It represents the next frontier in managing urban organics," Lindenthal told the Pine Cone. "We are very pleased to have this opportunity to test this tech-

On Friday, the waste management district is set to unveil the plant — a collaboration between the MRWMD and Lafayette-based Zero Waste Energy, a firm that licens-

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These aren't giant purple people eaters, but they will eat castoff food from Monterey Peninsula restaurants and turn it into compost and methane gas.

City administrator received most pay in 2012

■ But police fill bulk of Top 10

By MARY SCHLEY

HE CITY'S chief executive, Jason Stilwell, who just completed his first full year working here, was the most highly paid employee of the City of Carmel in 2012, according to the salary survey released last week. A retired fire captain also did remarkably well, receiving a \$116,573.01 check for unused sick leave and vacation time, and so did a firefighter/EMT who was paid \$38,386.40 in overtime and \$5,306.40 for working on holidays.

Unseating Carmel Police Cmdr. Paul Tomasi at the top of the city payroll, Stilwell received a total of \$242,372.20, including \$170,192.62 in pay, \$6,322.05 for "miscellaneous," \$4,200 for his car allowance, \$3,394.40 in vacation payout, \$6,900 in deferred compensation and \$34,866.13 toward his California Public Employees retirement. The total also includes medical, dental/vision, life and accidental death and dismemberment benefits, which collectively amounted to

Tomasi, a sergeant in 2011, was the only city employee to

break the \$200,000 mark that year, mostly due to his \$46,764.27 in overtime pay. In 2012, he was third, at \$187,937.36, including \$102,980.86 in salary, \$23,254.57 in

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Water rebate request backfires on homeowner

By KELLY NIX

m WHEN DAVID Fockler found out the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District was offering a \$100 rebate for customers who install high-efficiency tankless water heaters, he jumped on the chance to cash in.

"I thought, '100 bucks, that will buy dinner," Fockler told The Pine Cone.

So Fockler purchased a new \$1,600 water heater for a

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Photographer stages whale of an exhibition



An admirer at a Tokyo museum gazes at one of Carmel photographer Bryant Austin's striking whale portraits. Austin will also have an exhibit of his work Feb. 2 at the Museum of Monterey. See page 16A.

State agencies urged to streamline desal project approvals

By KELLY NIX

ONE OF the main reasons a new water supply hasn't been developed for the Monterey Peninsula, despite decades of effort, is the tangle of state laws and agencies involved in getting any water project approved.

Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett wants to change that. Burnett, who is also vice president of the mayors' water group, has been meeting with officials from the State Water Resources Control Board, the California Public Utilities Commission and the California Coastal Commission, to help them get on the same page.

Burnett met independently during the last two weeks with Michael Lauffer, chief counsel with the State Water Resources Control Board, and California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird.

"With Laird," Burnett said, "my basic request was that he and the governor's office encourage the various state agencies to align their schedules and work together to get a project done."

Burnett also had a conversation with California Coastal Commission executive director Charles Lester in hopes the powerful agency can begin outlining any concerns it has with the project now — rather than later.

'He fully recognizes the situation we are in and said he

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Carmel: Closest ambulance should be sent to emergency calls

■ Burnett encourages county not to extend contract

By MARY SCHLEY

BREAKING AWAY from a decades-old practice, the ambulance company serving most of Monterey County wants the right to respond first to medical emergencies just outside the city limits of Carmel, even if the city's ambulance could get there more quickly, according to Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett.

That would put profits before safety, Burnett said, and he plans to take his arguments to the Monterey County Board of Supervisors when it considers extending the county's contract with AMR ambulance company Tuesday.

AMR had indicated it would take all calls — "even the calls where they would be significantly slower than Carmel's ambulance in providing a response," Burnett said. However, the city has been negotiating with AMR for the past six months "to avoid their proposed action, which would have really undone over two decades' worth of a good working

"If you're having a medical emergency or life-threatening injury, you want to have an ambulance there as soon as possible, and it doesn't matter to you who shows up," he said. "And it shouldn't matter to us, either."

Closest-ambulance rule

During negotiations, the closest-ambulance rule has remained in effect, but Burnett said that service is threatened.

"It's not an exaggeration to say that's a life-and-death situation," he said. "It is simply unacceptable for us to do anything other than send the closest ambulance."

AMR's position is profit driven, since Carmel area resi-

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