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At first look, Forest Theater plan gets high marks

■ Big share of expense for disabled access

By KELLY NIX

LIGHTING TO help theatergoers find their seats, safety handrails, wheelchair access, a cross aisle and other features are among the upgrades an architect said Tuesday would bring the 100-plus-year-old Forest Theater up to date and allow it to be open for productions again next year.

Chris Wasney of Cody Anderson Wasney Architects told the Carmel City Council at a hearing Tuesday evening that the improvements would mitigate safety hazards and improve accessibility at the historic venue, which was shuttered in April for health and safety concerns. The project, as Wasney presented it at the more than 4-hour meeting, would cost \$1,379,524.

Though the council had the option of approving the plan Tuesday night, it voted 4-1, with Carrie Theis dissenting, to meet next week to hear back from the design firm on the idea of putting disability seating in an alternative location than the architect had planned.

Wasney proposed placing two ADA seating areas where a new cross aisle would meet the center aisle and one of the side aisles — a plan that would also require an extensive boardwalk system and eliminate about 50 regular seats. However, councilwoman Victoria Beach asked whether seats

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CODY ANDERSON WASNEY ARCHITECTS

This detail of the site plan for the Forest Theater renovation shows the new center aisles and handicapped seating which are a big — and costly — part of the plan.

Mayors, water officials to ask state board for cutback delay

By KELLY NIX

A GROUP of mayors, water officials, environmental groups and others will sit down with officials from the State Water Resources Control Board in two weeks in an effort to stave off an order that would require California American Water to drastically curtail pumping from the Carmel River — a measure that could have serious impacts on the local economy, and especially to hotels, golf courses and other businesses that depend on water.

Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett is among those who will meet with staff from the state water board in Sacramento Nov. 7 to discuss a possible two-year extension of the Oct. 2009 cease and desist cutback order that compels Cal Am to roughly cut in half the amount of water it draws from the Carmel River. The current deadline for the cutbacks is Dec. 31, 2016.

“We all recognize the [cutback order] serves a function in focusing our attention on water supply projects, and we are very focused on that,” Burnett told The Pine Cone. “But imposing Draconian measures on the community doesn’t further that objective.”

Will they be receptive?

Peninsula residents use far less water than any other in the state, and being forced to curtail use much more would likely mean shuttered restaurants, businesses and hotels. The order also poses a potential health and safety risk since it means Peninsula customers would be limited to about 35 gallons per person per day, which is about half of what the typical customer currently uses.

It’s hoped that the November meeting will give some indication as to whether the state water board is even receptive to extending the cutback order, according to Burnett and Monterey Peninsula Water Management District general manager Dave Stoldt.

“It’s all geared toward seeing if we have a mutual understanding before we actually request a modification to the [cutback order],” said Stoldt.

“We want to make sure we are asking something that’s within the realm of possible,” Burnett said.

The state water board issued the order to protect the steelhead trout and red-legged frog populations of the Carmel River.

In April, the water district asked the state water board about the conditions under which the agency might consider extending the order. It also offered ways to mitigate the envi-

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PG&E SET TO RESUME WORK ON GAS MAINS

By KELLY NIX

NEARLY EIGHT months after PG&E workers caused a house to explode at Guadalupe and Third, the utility has been given the go-ahead by the California Public Utilities Commission to resume its operations in the village Friday.

Burnett says the city will be ‘vigilant’ about monitoring the work

On Thursday, city hall announced the CPUC had given PG&E the OK to resume work, but Mayor Jason Burnett said the city would “be vigilant” in monitoring the company’s work given its “demonstrated failures,” while a PG&E spokesman told The Pine Cone it has new measures in place to ensure safety.

Burnett also reiterated the city’s call for a high-level investigation of the March explosion.

“We continue to remain very much focused that the CPUC conduct a complete and independent investigation into PG&E’s wrongdoing,” Burnett said. “The resumption of work definitely does not mean this situation is resolved. The

type of behavior by PG&E that caused the explosion must never be repeated.”

Following the March 3 house explosion, the city restricted PG&E to doing only emergency work in Carmel.

PG&E spokesman Donald Cutler, though, said the utility has made significant enhancements to address concerns from Carmel, its residents and the CPUC.

“The CPUC and the city have thoroughly evaluated our safety protocols,” Cutler said.

The company, he said, invites questions from residents about its work and will hold a public outreach meeting Tuesday, Oct. 28, at Carmel Middle School from 4 to 6 p.m. to field concerns.

“We are really working hard to achieve a broad channel of communication,” Cutler said.

He also added “we are really pleased we can get the work done for the community now, and we are really happy to get the work done and to do so safely.”

In an April letter to the CPUC, PG&E Vice President Sumeet Singh said the company had made changes to prevent future accidents, including “enhancing” the process used by gas workers to tap pipelines, adding a new process to ensure workers have the right equipment and procedures in

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Joan Fontaine bequeathes house, valuables to Monterey County SPCA

By KELLY NIX

OSCAR-WINNING actress and long-time Carmel Highlands resident Joan Fontaine was an animal lover, so it wasn’t surprising that, after she died Dec. 15, 2013, her will showed that she wanted many of her treasured possessions to be sold and the proceeds given to the SPCA for Monterey County — where she adopted several pets over the years.

Among Fontaine’s belongings to be sold by Christie’s in four auctions later this year is the Oscar she won for the 1941 Alfred Hitchcock movie, “Suspicion.” Another valuable item to be sold is a Marc Chagall painting, which the auction house said could bring as much as \$600,000. The sale of Fontaine’s Carmel Highlands home where she lived for 30 years, listed for \$2.6 million,

will also benefit the SPCA.

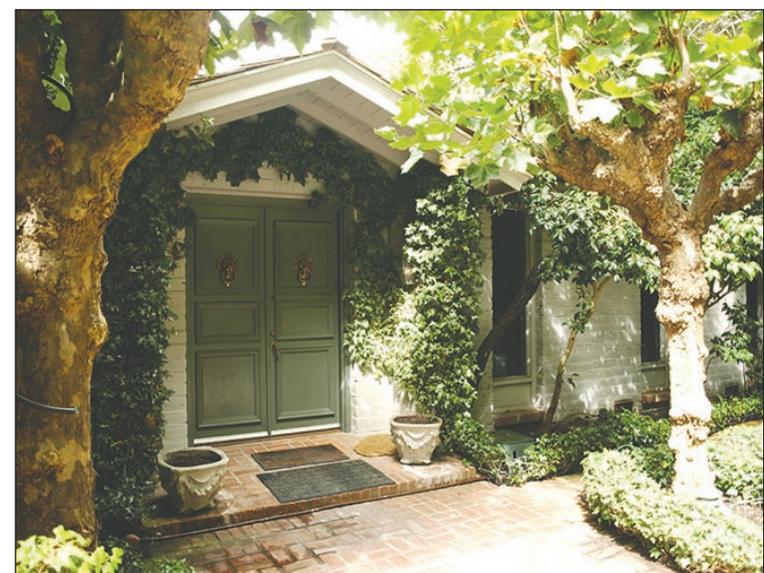
“Thanks to Miss Fontaine’s planning and compassionate legacy, animals rescued by the SPCA will receive love, healing, and placement in the lifelong homes they deserve,” SPCA Executive Director Gary Tiscornia said of her gift.

Among many pets she had in her life, Fontaine adopted three dogs from the SPCA for Monterey County: Samantha, Fang IV and Kita.

Fang IV and Samantha were with her at the end of her life and are being cared for by Fontaine’s assistant, Susan Pfeiffer, who is now a trustee of her estate.

SPCA spokeswoman Beth Brookhouser recalled the day she delivered Samantha, a border Collie who is now about 10, to

For 30 years this was the front door of actress Joan Fontaine, but following her death in December, the home will be sold with proceeds going to help local animals. The home is on Upper Walden Road in Carmel Highlands.



PHOTO/COURTESY SOTHEBY'S INTERNATIONAL REALTY

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