

The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 101 No. 41

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

October 9-15, 2015

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

CANDIDATE'S HOME CHECKED FOR METH LAB

By MARY SCHLEY

POLICE AND firefighters cordoned off a house on Santa Rita Street near First Avenue and sent in a hazardous-materials team to clean up the apparent leavings of a meth lab Sunday after the former occupants — Lucas Austin and two housemates — were evicted about a week ago.

Officers are now on the hunt for Austin — who ran for city council in 2014 and abruptly closed his Mail Mart store

on Dolores Street this summer.

At the house Oct. 5, police also found an ounce of marijuana, as well as a handgun and ammunition.

“For the last couple of weeks, there’s been an eviction process going on at the house, and after the residents were evicted, the owners came in on Sunday to do a cleanup,” said Carmel Police Cmdr. Paul Tomasi.

“When they went in, the cleanup crew started to find a lot of marijuana, and some jars labeled ‘HCl — hydrochloric acid — so they got a little concerned and decided to call the police,” Tomasi said. “Which was smart. They weren’t going to stay inside, because, with those kinds of chemicals, was it some sort of lab?”

The Monterey Fire Department and an ambulance responded, as did the Monterey County Health department and a regional hazardous-materials team.

Monterey Fire Division Chief Stew Roth said the hazardous-materials crews went inside the home using “a special type of suit that has respiratory protection on the outside,” and found “hydrochloric acid and other components for the use and manufacture of methamphetamine.”

But they also determined there was no immediate danger, so the haz-mat team turned the scene over to Carmel P.D. and the regional narcotics team, which has assumed the investigation of the former occupants, who are suspected of marijuana sales and other crimes, according to Tomasi.

“The Peninsula Regional Narcotics and

See METH page 22A

New showdown over beach fires

■ Coastal commission orders city to allow them on weekends

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY council violated the Coastal Act when it enacted an emergency ordinance banning fires on Carmel Beach on weekends and holidays, according to an Oct. 2 letter from an enforcement supervisor with the California Coastal Commission. Therefore, Patrick Veesart told city officials, the ban “is not effective and enforceable” and won’t be until the city undertakes the lengthy and uncertain process of amending its Local Coastal Program, which establishes the city’s guidelines for beach access, protecting the environment, development and other issues.

City officials, however, see it differently.

“The coastal commission may be taking the position that the weekend fire ban is invalid, but I don’t believe it’s invalid,” Mayor Jason Burnett said. “Unless I’m told otherwise by someone at the city, the policy is that fires are not

See FIRES page 25A

Council takes first steps to ban smoking

By MARY SCHLEY

ACCORDING TO an ordinance considered by the Carmel City Council Tuesday night, smoking should be banned in most public places in the city — and some private ones, too.

“Many communities have ordinances dealing with smoking,” city attorney Don Freeman, who drafted the ordinance, told the council at the Oct. 6 meeting. “But this probably goes further than any other.”

The law would ban smoking on streets and sidewalks everywhere but in the single-family residential district, as well as at public facilities like Sunset Center and the Forest Theater, and in outdoor seating areas at restaurants and outside bars. The city already banned smoking at the beach in 2005 and in the parks in 2007.

The ordinance would also mean that residents of condo and apartment complexes wouldn’t be allowed to smoke on

See SMOKING page 24A

City attorney announces crackdown on short-term rentals

By MARY SCHLEY

STEPPING UP efforts to put an end to short-term rentals — which are banned in Carmel but still happen, anyway — city attorney Don Freeman announced Tuesday the city would be taking a “very aggressive” stance on them, including hauling property owners into court.

He made the statement at the Oct. 6 city council meeting “in public, so there will be no surprises,” and said some 27 properties are on the target list, with more to come. Combing through various short-term rental sites like VRBO and Airbnb, a volunteer identified the dozen-plus houses.

“We will be contacting each of the property owners and advising them of our ordinance,” Freeman said. “We will then be following up with a letter basically saying the city’s taking an aggressive stance in order to eliminate short-term rentals.”

The homeowners will be asked to sign a document indicating they received the letter and a copy of the ordinance — which prohibits rentals shorter than 30 days — and will be ordered to remove any online advertising.

“If we’re not getting compliance from the folks, the city is authorized to conduct some sting operations,” Freeman said. Those operations would entail people posing as renters and signing a deal for the short-term rental. Then the city would use the evidence to argue for an injunction against the property owner in court.

That process would be time consuming and costly, but the city could recoup those costs, Freeman said, through a court

See RENTALS page 22A

Historians aghast over Pt. Lobos teardown plan

By CHRIS COUNTS

WHEN THE Point Lobos Ranch finally opens its gates to the public, the future state park may be named after local pioneer A.M. Allan. Yet just a short hike from the would-be park, Allan’s historic stone house — a landmark along Highway 1 — could be demolished.

According to county planning documents, Richard and Daryl Larsen want to tear down the dwelling, along with another, smaller home nearby, and replace them with a 6,321-square-foot single-family house and a 2,990-square-foot second dwelling, plus a workshop addition to an existing barn.

Augie Louis, the president of the Point Lobos Foundation, and Sandy Lydon, a local historian, told The Pine Cone that losing the Allan house would be terrible.

“It was a stagecoach stop before Highway 1,” Louis said. “It was also the home of A.M. Allan, and it would be awful if it were destroyed.”

According to a 2012 obituary for Mary Riley Whisler, who grew up in the house, it was built in 1878 by a whaler. Her son Patrick said the stone exterior was added in 1920 when it was renovated.

A successful racetrack designer and builder, Allan lived at Point Lobos for 32 years and recognized the

need to protect its unique environment. Three years after he died, his family sold 348 acres to the State of California, a deal that created Point Lobos State Reserve.

See TEARDOWN page 24A

Desal well restart OK’d

By KELLY NIX

A DECISION by the California Coastal Commission Tuesday will allow Cal Am to operate its \$10 million test slant well in Marina, but a company spokeswoman said it will take awhile for pumping to actually resume.

Coastal commissioners at an Oct. 6 meeting in Long Beach voted unanimously to amend a permit for California American Water’s test well to allow the operation to proceed. Cal Am turned off the slant well in June after groundwater levels dipped.

“We expect it will be about a month before we turn the well back on,” spokeswoman Catherine Stedman said Wednesday. “We’re performing maintenance on the pump.”

Apart from pump maintenance, Cal Am will conduct a video survey of the well to make sure it’s in good condition, and perform any additional work.

Cal Am officials have said the test well — which is expected to show whether slant wells are feasible as a source of water for desal plants, including the compa-

See WELL page 25A



The new owners of a landmark home near Point Lobos want to tear it down, while some want it saved. But is it worth fixing?