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MISSION COURTYARD GETTING MAJOR FACELIFT

By MARY SCHLEY



PHOTO/VIC GRABRIAN

Crews are resurfacing the Quadrangle Courtyard and laying new underground utility lines as part of the ongoing restoration of the historic Carmel Mission. The work should be done by mid-August.

THE CARMEL Mission Foundation — the group that has raised millions of dollars for the restoration and seismic retrofit of the Carmel Mission — is spending \$2 million to overhaul the historic Mission's courtyard, according to foundation president and CEO Vic Grabrian.

The courtyard at the center of the Mission complex, with its iconic fountain, is frequently used for community and parish events, and generates a lot of money for the Catholic Diocese, which rents the space for public and private functions.

The renovation work is already underway and includes removing the old concrete stretching from the fountain to the edges of the courtyard, installing new water and sewer lines, laying electrical cables, and installing a new hard surface that should last nearly another century, Grabrian said.

General contractor Blach Construction, which has handled the other restoration work there over the past several years, is also in charge of this project.

To accommodate heavy equipment and materials, and to keep the public out of the construction zone, one lane of Rio Road has been closed in front of the mission.

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Candidates sought for council, boards and commissions

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER CONCLUDING that the 267-vote difference between Bobby Richards and third-place council candidate Richard Kreitman in the April 12 election was too significant of a gap to assume voters would want Kreitman on the council, the Carmel City Council voted Tuesday to seek applications from members of the public interested in filling the vacancy left by Steve Dallas when he was elected mayor. But being a candidate in a past election or serving on a city commission could garner extra points when the council appoints the new member June 1.

The city also needs to fill the seat left by Richards on the Community Activities & Cultural Commission, the planning commission vacancy resulting from the election of Jan Reimers to the council, and the position on the Harrison Memorial Library Board of Trustees made by Martha

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CAL AM DESAL TEST WELL PUMPING AGAIN

By KELLY NIX

CALIFORNIA AMERICAN Water this week turned its desalination test well in Marina back on, about two months after the company was forced to switch it off.

The test well had been shut off since the first week of March after a storm surge damaged a discharge pipe. Cal Am needed an amendment to its permit for the well from the California Coastal Commission in order to resume testing, and got the approval in April.

Coastal commission analyst Tom Luster told The Pine Cone that Cal Am resumed the test well operation Monday at 1:22 p.m.

"They had to reconnect the discharge pipe and had some electrical issue that needed to be fixed," Luster said Tuesday. "They notified me yesterday it was turned back on."

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PHOTO/COURTESY CAL AM

Workers repair a discharge pipeline for Cal Am's test well in Marina. The work allowed the well to resume pumping Monday.

Vacation rental firm disappears with customers' cash

By MARY SCHLEY

ITS FACEBOOK page has vanished, its website no longer exists, and many of its customers have nothing to show for the thousands of dollars they put down to rent high-end properties for vacations, weddings and other occasions.

Elite Carmel, the company founded by the late Terry Coates, stopped responding to customers' inquiries a couple of months ago, and his widow, Sheresa Coates, sent an email to clients at the end of March saying she was shutting the company down and declaring bankruptcy, and wouldn't be refunding anyone's money.

P.B. housing project goes to planning commission

By KELLY NIX

THE AFFORDABLE housing project proposed by the Pebble Beach Company that would allow some of its employees to live close to work, but which has riled more than a few nearby Pacific Grove neighbors, will be up for public review next week.

The Monterey County Planning Commission will hold a public hearing May 11 in Salinas for the proposed 24-unit apartment complex off Congress Road.

Next week's hearing will be the first public meeting since the lengthy environmental impact report for the proposal was released in March. It will offer the public a chance to tell members of the planning commission and county officials their thoughts on the proposal.

The \$7 million project, which was required by the county when it granted permits for Pebble Beach Co.'s final buildout plan, and which will be funded by the company, would back up to Pacific Grove's Del Monte Park neighborhood. Some residents there argue the apartment complex will mean more noise, traffic and parking problems, and will have a negative impact on the environment. Other residents say the project will be an improvement.

The three alternative sites to the Congress location out-

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"Due to unforeseen events, the company has closed its doors effective immediately. Unfortunately, due to the circumstances of the closure, refunds are not possible at this time," she wrote in a March 26 email. "I realize that this will be very upsetting to you and, while my personal explanation will be of little comfort, I feel you are owed an explanation."

She went on to tell the story of her late husband, who started the company in 2008 and died of a heart attack in March 2015 at the age of 45. "After his passing, I tried to keep his dream alive by keeping the company going," continued Coates, who had run her own estate liquidation company and became Elite Carmel's "house manager" in 2013. "Despite my best efforts, there were a number of issues of which I was not aware and that did not come to light until after Terry had passed."

She didn't say what those issues were but said she had "exhausted all other possible alternatives to keep the company alive," and ultimately, she was advised by her lawyers to file for bankruptcy.

"I understand that you may have questions regarding this situation; however, at this point I must defer all questions to my attorneys and will not be responding personally," she wrote, without identifying her legal representatives. "Please know that I am truly sorry for the inconvenience this has caused."

At wit's end

The apologies meant little to those who have been stiffed out of their money and had their plans thrown into disarray.

Peninsula residents John and Lois Tennant told The Pine Cone they had arranged to rent a house on Sunset Drive in Pacific Grove for some visiting family members April 21-23. Although he found the home through VRBO, John Tennant said he was contacted by Elite Carmel, which was managing it, and he was required to pay \$600 on signing the rental agreement, with the balance due 60 days before the rental, for a total of \$3,064.

But then he received Coates' email saying the company had been shut down.

"She's saying she's not going to have any further correspondence with anyone and to talk to her attorney," he told The Pine Cone. "But she doesn't say who the attorney is."

Jeff Dickey said he had planned to host a family reunion

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