

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Lowering voting age would be costly, supes told

By KELLY NIX

ALLOWING 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local elections in Monterey County would likely not only violate the California Constitution, which sets the voting age at 18, it would present colossal administrative hurdles, mean much

greater costs to hold elections, and could result in the duplication of votes and other errors, the county elections chief told county supervisors Tuesday.

County registrar Claudio Valenzuela told the supervisors Tuesday about the formidable challenges the elections office would face if the voting age was lowered — an idea proposed last year by supervisor Luis Alejo and former supervisor Simon Salinas.

If Monterey County put such a program in place, it would likely face a test to the constitutionality of lowering the voting age.

However, even if it were to overcome the legal hurdle, Valenzuela said the county would have to overhaul its voting database.

“There are significant and substantial operational challenges,” said Valenzuela, whose presentation May 7 followed a report last month that generally addressed the issues surrounding lowering the age to vote.

### Separate database

For example, Valenzuela said VoteCal — California’s voter registration database system that connects to all 58 counties in the state — is not designed to support 16- and 17-year-old active voters.

Instead, Monterey County would have to establish — and pay for — a separate database which would not be linked to VoteCal, and voter

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## Carmel Rancho OK’d for second cannabis store

■ County also looking to loosen rules for outdoor grows

By CHRIS COUNTS

TWO YEARS after launching an effort to establish a cannabis-based “wellness center,” Synchronicity Holistic, in a building she owns at 26390 Carmel Rancho Blvd., Valentinia Piccinini received the go-ahead May 8 from the Monterey County Planning Commission, which voted 6-1 to approve her permit.

Piccinini’s plans had been in jeopardy because a county ordinance requires that two cannabis businesses be at least 1,500 feet apart, and another marijuana-related shop, Big Sur Cannabotanicals, is already operating closer than that.

But the county’s ad hoc cannabis committee made a recommendation last summer to allow more than one marijuana-related business to operate in several designated shopping centers, including the one where her building is located.

### How many shops?

At the hearing in Salinas, Piccinini’s attorney, Jason Retterer, urged planning commissioners to let her open her store. “Her application complies with county rules and regulations,” Retterer said.

But attorney Jennifer Rosenthal, who represents Big Sur Cannabotanicals, said the county could set a precedent by allowing an exception to the 1,500-foot rule, and she warned the change could allow up to eight cannabis businesses in the immediate area — and as many as 14 between there and Carmel Valley Village.

Also commenting at the hearing were a number of Piccinini’s supporters, including a pharmacist, a nurse and a handful of medical marijuana patients. Most had very favorable views about cannabis and its medicinal properties.

“I was bedridden for more than half my life with kidney disease,” resident Jeff Cooper said. “I was on morphine for 10 years. Because of cannabis, I got rid of the morphine pump and had no withdrawals. I support her 100 percent — it’s just great medicine.”

Also speaking at the hearing was county public health official Krista Hanni, who expressed skepticism about health claims associated with marijuana. Hanni suggested that the

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## Redwood bridge opens; trail next



PHOTO/BIG SUR LAND TRUST

To keep the feet of future hikers dry as they cross San Jose Creek, three redwood bridges have been built. If all goes according to plan, the trail that takes hikers across them will open this fall. See Page 13A.

## DIVIDED COUNCIL VOTES FOR BAN ON WOOD FIRES

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER HEARING from nearly two dozen people on both sides of the issue, the city council voted 3-2 Tuesday night to allow only propane fires on Carmel Beach for a year. But the change won’t happen anytime soon.

Because it contradicts the city’s Local Coastal Program and the plan the council approved three years ago that drastically restricted the century-old beach-fire tradition while still allowing a few wood fires, a complete ban on such fires, even a temporary one, can’t be done without adopting a new ordinance, according to planning director Marc Wiener. And that law would have to undergo preliminary and final votes by the council, usually a month apart, and then require another 30 days to take effect.

“We have determined that an ordinance is necessary in order to enforce the ban on wood fires,” he told The Pine Cone Wednesday.

And because the ban would significantly change the rules the council approved in 2016 that allow up to a dozen fire pits on the sand south of 10th Avenue from spring through fall, the city will have to issue a new coastal development permit,

which can be appealed to the California Coastal Commission.

The council’s May 7 vote came at the end of a lengthy hearing in which some argued for continuing with the current setup, which allows wood fires in pits between the hours of 4 and 10 p.m., as well as unlimited propane fires, because it has met the objectives of reducing the amount of smoke in the air and charcoal in the sand.

### No, no not one

But others insisted all wood fires should be banned because allowing even one is unhealthy, and the smoke keeps some people with breathing issues from visiting the beach when they want to.

Richard Stedman, air pollution control officer with the Monterey Bay Air Resources District, sent a letter to Mayor

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## Conflicts delay vote on vacation rental law

By MARY SCHLEY

BECAUSE THREE of its members have conflicts of interest, the city council wasn’t able to vote this week on a plan to prohibit short-term rentals downtown and in apartment complexes, according to planning director Marc Weiner.

The council had been moving toward such a ban, but the process came to a halt Tuesday night since council members Bobby Richards and Carrie Theis are in the hotel business, which competes with short-term rentals. In addition, councilwoman Jan Reimers owns a vacation rental.

“The transient rental ordinance was continued because we are still working on correcting the city council conflict issue,” Wiener told The Pine Cone Wednesday. “When the council first considered this item in March, it directed staff to return with an ordinance. Four members of the council participated; however, it was later determined that two of them have

See **CONFLICTS** page 18A

## Finding the bright side of the Great Depression

After Morse’s new company thrived during its first decade, in its second decade it faced the challenge of surviving the Great Depression. Many companies did not, but Morse never lost his vision for the company, and his drive and focus saw him through this difficult time.

### PART VIII

WHAT WAS sometimes referred to as the Hoover Depression should have been called the Roosevelt Depression. Roosevelt had not the remotest idea how to handle a situation of this sort. I give him the benefit of being sincere and believing in what he was trying to accomplish, but he made errors for which we are paying and always will pay.

There wasn’t anything particularly different about life

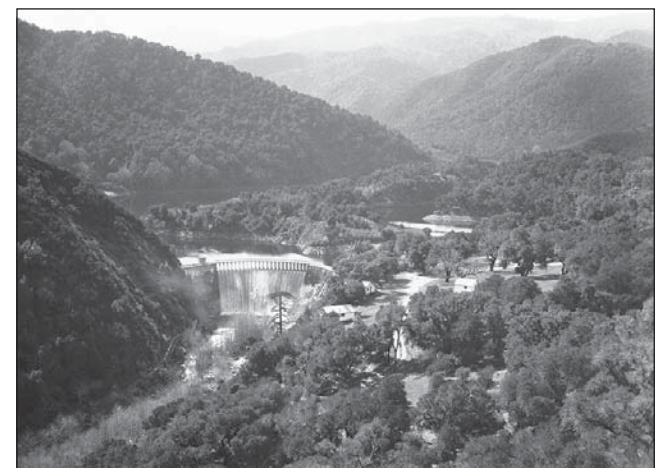
## The Morse memoirs

during the Depression, except that there wasn’t as much excitement. It was more of a struggle to do business, and the general character of the people was different. Naturally, there couldn’t be as much gaiety, but there was still polo and still golf tournaments, still gay parties in the Grill, and the young people seemed to be having as much fun as we used to have

in our day. Nevertheless, the tempo was not the same, nor was there the same joy of living.

During the Depression, the real estate business went to

See **MORSE** page 19A



PHOTO/JULIAN P. GRAHAM PHOTO, PEBBLE BEACH CO. LAGORIO ARCHIVE

Morse oversaw completion of the San Clemente Dam in 1921. It was a key component of the water system his company developed and sold in the 1930s. The dam was torn down in 2015.