Thanks for the memories

MVHS GRADS REFLECT ON THEIR POSITIVE HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

By Kevin Forestieri

Hundred of friends and family members flooded the Mountain View High School football field to see off the graduating class of 2015 last Friday. And while some graduates chose to give a sentimental “goodbye” to the high school, the teaching staff and their friends, others felt a thanks was in order.

“Thank you for all the memories. Mountain View High School has been an incredible place to enjoy them,” Miller said.

Though it’s commonplace to make glowing remarks about the academic achievements of the graduating class, Principal Dave Grissom pointed out it’s been a particularly solid year, with more than 10 percent of the class of 2015 maintaining a weighted grade point average of 4.5 or greater throughout their high school years.

School board hesitates over pricey Castro plans

SCOPE OF DESIGNS FOR $43M TWO-SITE CAMPUS A CONCERN FOR SOME TRUSTEES

By Kevin Forestieri

The Mountain View Whisman school board got its first detailed look at ambitious plans to change the face of Castro Elementary, transforming the site to accommodate hundreds of students on a shared, two-school campus.

But some board members remained skeptical last week, questioning the $43 million projected cost of the project and wondering whether it’s a good idea to build a school for 900 students, which could cause cramping at Castro and a shortage of enrollment elsewhere.

The plan calls for renovating the existing buildings on campus to house the district’s Dual Immersion program, and adding an entirely new wing of two-story buildings for the traditional school program. The existing multipurpose room would be converted into a kindergarten classroom, and the library would be turned into two “flex-space” rooms.

Both schools would have access to centrally located shared facilities, including a new multipurpose room, a new library and a renovated playground space.

At the June 4 board meeting, board member Ellen Wheeler said the firm Quattrocchi Kwok Architects did an impressive job of designing a two-site campus project.

Council approves housing subdivision for Superfund hot spot

By Mark Noack

An old motel bordering Highway 101, considered one of the most contaminated sites in the Middlefield-Ellis-Whisman Superfund site, will be redeveloped into a 26-home subdivision as part of a set of approvals granted Tuesday by the Mountain View City Council.

The plans for 277 Fairchild Drive were unanimously endorsed by the City Council despite concerns from nearby residents that any intensified construction and excavation could send toxic trichloroethylene (TCE) from the groundwater up into the air. Nevertheless the housing developer, city officials and an Environmental Protection Agency regulator all expressed confidence that a plan to monitor and vent the contaminants would provide adequate safeguards for the neighborhood.

“I understand why anyone would be nervous about exposure, but I believe enough has been done here, or will be done, to ensure this will be safe,” said Councilman Lenny Siegel. “Mountain View is a model for constructing homes on TCE sites.”

Safety concerns on digging in the MEW Superfund site were
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Mountain View Voice  MountainViewOnline.com  June 12, 2015
Voices
AROUND TOWN

What is the one thing you would bring to a graduation ceremony?

“I would bring a cutout of the face of the person who is graduating, like they’re doing at the Warriors games.”
Ashesh Satvedi, Menlo Park

“I would probably bring a big bottle of water or some sort of thermos beverage, because those things run on and on, and I’m always thirsty.”
Julia Beal, Redwood City

“I would bring a camera because I want to capture the moment and memorialize it.”
Xuan Wu, Mountain View

“I would bring a box of Sprinkles cupcakes because that’s what I got at my graduation.”
Jenny Hsu, Menlo Park

“I would probably bring a bottle of champagne and a good book. A book full of life advice and the champagne because I think graduation is a good excuse to have some bubbles.”
Morgan Roderick, Berlin, Germany

Have a question for Voices Around Town? Email it to editor@mv-voice.com

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The 4th of July Fireworks Spectacular with the San Francisco Symphony
Saturday, July 4, 2015
Shoreline Amphitheatre

Tickets are on sale now!

- Mountain View residents may also purchase discounted lawn and upper reserve tickets for $13.50 (4 tickets per family limit). Discounted tickets are also courtesy of Shoreline Amphitheatre and the City of Mountain View.
- “To obtain your free or discounted tickets: BRING THIS COUPON, proof of residency (a driver’s license AND current utility bill with a Mountain View address) or a 2015 Shoreline Resident Ticket ID card with valid ID to the Amphitheatre Box Office.
- Shoreline Amphitheatre Box Office Hours: Monday – Friday 12 noon to 5:00 p.m., Saturdays 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Box office can be reached at (650) 967-4040.
- Doors open at 5:00 p.m. with games and activities for family fun.
- Get your free tickets by 2:00 p.m. on Monday, June 22 unless sold out prior to this date.
- Discounted tickets can be purchased up to and including the day of the event.
- An additional $10.00 parking fee will be collected the night of the event.

Helpful Tips to get to Shoreline Amphitheatre
- Easy access to the Amphitheatre is available from the Stevens Creek Trail and Permanente Creek Trail.
- Shoreline Amphitheatre will provide supervised bike parking for this event.
- Trail hours will be extended to allow public access after the event to walk or ride home.

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Local News

POT-SMOKING ARREST
A 46-year-old Mountain View man was arrested last week after police viewed a cellphone video allegedly showing the man smoking marijuana with a minor.
A mother on the 400 block of N. Shoreline Boulevard called police on Friday, June 5 at around 10 p.m. and said she found both photos and a video on her son’s phone that showed his friend, a 14-year-old boy, smoking marijuana with an adult. Officers searched the area and were able to locate a man, identified as Lamont Williams. Police confirmed that he was the man in the video and was smoking pot, according to Sgt. Saul Jaeger of the Mountain View Police Department.
Williams was arrested on charges of contributing to the delinquency of a minor as well as an outstanding warrant, and

GOOGLE SEeks INPUT ON SELF-DRIVING CARS
As a new fleet of self-driving cars begins zipping around the streets of Mountain View, the team at Google is trying to gauge the response from the humans: misconceptions, emotions, et al. On Friday, the company launched a new website at google.com/selfdrivingcar to coordinate information about its autonomous car program. The site explains the ins and outs of the new technology and provides a new avenue for the public to give feedback.
Self-driving cars have already been field-tested in Mountain View for about two years, but Google engineers recently kicked the program into high gear. Last month, the company announced plans to begin testing as many as 25 new autonomous vehicle throughout the city.
Through the new site, the company provided more information on a dozen accidents involving its autonomous fleet over the last two years. Google officials highlighted that all those crashes were caused by human error, not the automated software. Google spokeswoman Jacquelyn Miller pledged the company would provide a monthly report on any accidents or other notable activity going forward.
Google designers have emphasized that the public’s perception is very important at this early stage, with production for the consumer market still years off. Any interested in providing feedback to Google, can send a comment through the “Contact Us” section of the site.

—Mark Noack

Police Log

AUTO BURGLARY
500 block S. Rengstorff Av., 6/3
500 block Showers Dr., 6/3
600 block Waltham St., 6/3

BATTERY
2600 block W. El Camino Real, 6/3
2400 block Charleston Rd., 6/4
Crisanto Av. & Escuela Av., 6/7
W. Middlefield Rd. & N. Shoreline Blvd., 6/7

GRAND THEFT
1000 block N. Rengstorff Av., 6/3
700 block E. El Camino Real, 6/5
1900 block California St., 6/6
1900 block Latham St., 6/6

RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY
500 block W. Middlefield Rd., 6/4

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Agricultural vision grows for Stieper park

CITY APPROVES PLAN FOR PASSIVE GARDEN SPACE AT NEW PARK ON NORTH RENGSTORFF

By Mark Noack

The agriculture roots of Mountain View will get a new plot of fertile ground, thanks to a decision by the City Council on Tuesday. Under a conceptual plan for Mountain View’s newest park, the Rengstorff Avenue house and orchard that was formerly home to the Stieper family will be made into a public “sanctuary” to display the achievements of the area’s historic farmers as well as their modern counterparts. The plans call for the North Rengstorff Avenue Park — perhaps better known as the Stieper property — to be a new home for community gardeners, beekeepers and history buffs.

“There are some things that are a treat to vote for. This is one of them,” said Councilman Ken Rosenberg at the June 9 meeting. The 1.2-acre plot at 771 North Rengstorff Ave. was purchased by the city in 2013 from longtime resident Frances Stieper. Rebuffing offers from developers to acquire her property, Stieper agreed to sell her home to the city for $3 million with the idea that it would be preserved as some type of public open space.

At recent public meetings, dozens of residents came to support the idea of making the space a “passive park,” meaning the site would retain its scenic character and wouldn’t be designed for sports or intense recreation. The plan that emerged called for keeping as many of Stieper’s trees as possible and adding a series of gardens, which would be maintained with the help of local farming clubs. As envisioned, the growing space would be used for demonstrations to teach agriculture skills.

As a centerpiece to the plans, the park would also be the new home for the Immigrant House that housed migrant workers more than a century ago. The structure will be rehabilitated back to its historical design and be used as an educational display. Members of its booster group, the Friends of the Immigrant House, announced at the meeting they had raised $73,000 of the $180,000 needed to restore the building, and city officials agreed to cover an additional $60,000 in estimated costs.

As part of the approvals, the city also accepted the gift a two-story steel windmill that was given by Mountain View residents Jon and Carol Garliepp specifically for the site.

The former Stieper residence will be demolished in the coming months and a new cluster of trees will be planted in its place. A final design plan for the park is expected by early next year, according to city staff. By that time, the city Parks and Recreation Commission will also consider selecting a group to administer the gardens and approving a formal name for the park.

Assuming those plans proceed smoothly, construction on the new park with begin next spring with the goal to finish by the end of 2016.

Email Mark Noack at mnoack@mv-voice.com

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Last-ditch effort to re-open Whisman school

By Kevin Forestieri

With only a week to go before the Mountain View Whisman school board decides on whether to open a new school in the district, members of the Whisman and Slater neighborhood area came out in full force to make one last appeal to the board.

Donning green shirts, buttons and pins, members of the “Reopen Slater” group came up one by one at the June 4 meeting, telling the school board that choosing not to open a new school in the north-east quadrant of Mountain View would be misguided, inequitable and cause many families to leave the district.

The board is expected to make a decision at the Thursday, June 11, meeting, which will take place after the Voice’s Wednesday press deadline. The years-long demand for a new school has been seriously considered over the last six months, after Interim Superintendent Kevin Skelly set up two committees, the Boundary Advisory Task Force and the District Facilities Committee, to assess whether the district has the enrollment and the bond money needed to open a school for the more than 700 students living in a corner of the city with no neighborhood school.

But when it came time to make recommendations to the board, both committees found that a ninth school was out of reach, saying the district had neither the finances nor the future enrollment needed to sustain a ninth campus. Only a few modest shifts in the boundaries were recommended, re-zoning residents in the Whisman neighborhood between Tyrella Avenue and Whisman road from the overcrowded and popular Huff Elementary to Theuerkauf.

Members of the Reopen Slater group decried the recommendations at the Thursday meeting. They said the task force showed plenty of concern for the handful of students who live within the Huff boundary who can’t attend because of overcrowding, but completely disregard the roughly 700 students in the Whisman and Slater area who can’t go...
The Mountain View Whisman School District successfully found a new superintendent last week, but there was a noticeable bump in the road near the end of the process when the board considered dropping the search firm Proact.

Board president Chris Chiang called for a meeting last month to review allegations of gross misconduct against Gary Solomon, the CEO of the Chicago-based search firm, over inappropriate activities while he worked at a high school in Illinois.

According to the Chicago Sun-Times, documents from the school district show he allegedly sent racist and sexually suggestive emails to students and fellow administrators.

Several school districts fired Proact once the news of the allegations broke, but the Mountain View Whisman school board members decided they were already far enough along in the search process, and had a sufficient degree of separation from Solomon, that they were comfortable continuing with the $20,000 contract.

Chiang brought up the issue at the May 12 board meeting, where he explained that hiring the new superintendent using a search firm with a questionable reputation could cause problems because the new hire would be chosen under a cloud of controversy. On the other hand, he said, he had concerns that if the board severed the contract early the district will be “out cold” near the final steps of the search process.

Board member Bill Lambert said the consultant from the search firm who worked directly with the district, Michael Hinojosa, was not involved in the controversies and even resigned from Proact. Chiang said Hinojosa, upon hearing the news about Solomon, quit the firm while on the plane ride home from California.

Despite working with someone far removed from Solomon, Lambert said, the school district likely has the basis for claiming a material breach of the contract, and it should try to find a way to compensate Hinojosa directly for his work, rather than Proact.

At the time of the meeting, Chiang said there was no deal on the table between the district and Hinojosa to break the tarnishing Proact’s name,” Coladonato said. “If it operates as a suit with Proact is separate in my mind.”

Board member Greg Coladonato agreed with the majority of the board to go ahead and finish the contract, saying he wasn’t too concerned that Solomon had any kind of impact on the search process.

“I don’t know to what extent this whole ‘news kerfuffle’ is tarnishing Proact’s name,” Coladonato said. “If it operates as a completely independent subsidiary then it doesn’t worry me as much.”

In hindsight, Chiang said, it probably would have been good to have something in the contract with Proact that the board approved in January that allows the district to get out of it when allegations like these come up.

“If a firm finds itself in some kind of ethical misconduct, there should be a ‘get out of contract’ clause, but we don’t have that,” Chiang said.

Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com

By Kevin Forestieri

CANCER SURVIVORS’ DAY:
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Event Location:
El Camino Hospital - 2500 Grant Road, Mountain View
Ground Floor, Conference Center

REGISTER NOW! www.elcaminohospital.org/SurvivorDay
Members of the Mountain View Whisman school board announced that they have found a new superintendent in Ayindé Rudolph, an educator from Buffalo, New York with a background in public and charter school education.

The board unanimously approved the contract at the June 4 meeting, which includes a $200,000 starting salary and no specified increases in the coming years.

Board president Chris Chiang said the amenities in the contract are relatively modest compared to neighboring school districts, called FutureReady, which aims to not work. Lachter said he wondered why superintendents would even want to get a job in the year following termination if they were guaranteed $200,000 to not work. Lachter said he would just take the year off.

Other members of the public took issue with the number of days of notice the superintendent needs to give out in order to resign, which was set at 15 days in the contract.

Thrith Pauly, a Huff parent, said, “The important thing is not the number there. It will be on the board if the superintendent brings a concern to the board it doesn’t get addressed, and that board members will just end up doing whatever they want...

Frustrated by the decision, Pauly said the board asks the public to pass bonds and donate money to local schools, but when they bring a concern to the board it doesn’t get addressed, and that board members will just end up doing whatever they want.

“After the last superintendent’s resignation, all of the community’s comments meant nothing?” Pauly asked the board.

Board member Greg Coladonato said the number of days to give notice really isn’t important if the board and the superintendent have a strong, mutual working relationship and can work out a good relationship so he doesn’t feel like quitting,” Coladonato said. “I don’t think there will be a quarter-million-dollar lump sum payment. I don’t think it’s possible with this contract.”

Chiang later told the Voice that Rudolph watched the meeting online and agreed to a change of notice really isn’t important if the board and the superintendent have a strong, mutual working relationship and can work out a good relationship so he doesn’t feel like quitting,” Coladonato said. “I don’t think there will be a quarter-million-dollar lump sum payment. I don’t think it’s possible with this contract.”

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MV won’t join suit against Hwy. 85 express lanes

By Mark Noack

A coalition of South Bay cities is taking the Valley Transportation Authority to court over a controversial plan to expand Highway 85 with paid express lanes. Mountain View, however, will be conspicuously absent in the case.

The new lawsuit — filed by the cities of Cupertino, Los Gatos and Saratoga — seeks to force Santa Clara County transportation officials to conduct a full environmental study of the proposed highway expansion. The VTA proposal, dubbed the Silicon Valley Express Lane Program, calls for converting existing carpool lanes into express lanes, which lone motorists can legally use for converting existing carpool lanes to express lanes. The new suit demands a full environmental impact report, an intense study that would likely take months, or perhaps years, to complete.

“This lawsuit is a mechanism to say, ‘Wait a minute: Let’s study some alternatives.’”

CUPERTINO MAYOR ROB SINKS

new express lanes would exacerbate highway traffic, noise or greenhouse-gas emissions. They allege those concerns were essentially dodged by VTA officials when they granted a so-called negative declaration to the highway proposal, ruling that it would have no serious environmental impacts that could not be mitigated.

At that point, city officials mutually decided it was time to bring their concerns to the courtroom, said Cupertino Mayor Rob Sinks. The new suit demands a full environmental impact report, an intense study that would likely take months, or perhaps years, to complete.

“This lawsuit is a mechanism to say, ‘Wait a minute: Let’s study some alternatives,’” Sinks said. “All the experts I’ve spoken with, they say (express lanes) are going to save almost no time.”

Mountain View City Council members discussed possibly joining the lawsuit in a closed-session meeting on May 19. No public report on the council’s decision was made from the closed-door talks.

Councilman Lenny Siegel said council members were generally supportive of the goals of the lawsuit; however a majority didn’t want to take on the case.

CRIME BRIEFS

PACKAGE THEFT ARREST

A Mountain View man suspected of stealing a package from the porch of a Palo Alto home and then trying to pawn off its contents on Craigslist was arrested when his buyer turned out to be an undercover Palo Alto officer.

Police said the man, Eric Trinidad Espinoza, was nabbed after the evening theft was captured on a home-surveillance video, which was widely shared on the social-network website Nextdoor. After seeing the video and finding a Craigslist listing for the item in the package, officers arrested the 39-year-old Mountain View resident in an undercover sting on May 30.

Police said Espinoza allegedly took the package at about 10:25 p.m. on May 18, though the theft wasn’t reported to the police until 10 days later. Espinoza is believed to have taken the package, which contained an awning with an estimated value of $250, after a delivery company left it on the porch.

The victim of the theft learned about the incident from a surveillance video, which he subsequently posted on Nextdoor, a neighborhood-based social network.

After posting the video, the victim began to track Craigslist for descriptions of the stolen awning. Once he saw a suspicious listing, he reported the theft to the police. An officer, posing as an interested buyer, then called Espinoza and arranged to meet him. Police said that in addition to the stolen property, Espinoza had in his possession methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia.

Espinoza was booked in the Santa Clara County Main Jail on charges of possession of stolen property, possession of methamphetamine and drug paraphernalia and driving with a suspended license.

Anyone with information about this incident or the suspect is asked to call the Palo Alto department’s 24-hour dispatch center at 650-329-2413. Anonymous tips can be emailed to paloalto@ipnow.org or sent via text message or voice mail to 650-383-8984.

—Gennady Sheyner

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NORTH BAYSHORE

Continued from page 5

said. The best deal he could find was in Sunnyvale at nearly twice the cost, he said. Just the price of moving would be upward of $14,000, he estimated.

"To Google, $14,000 is the cost of one of their dinners over there," he said with an incredulous smirk. "I wish they'd help me with a new space."

To Reilly, Google's handling of the evictions smacks of favoritism. Since his lease expired in 2013, he said he made multiple requests for a renewal. But he was kept on a month-to-month lease. Meanwhile, other tenants did get lease extensions, he said. Reilly described how another tenant with an active lease showed him blueprints for a new space that Google would provide. He questioned why others weren't getting similar help.

"I understand we have to go; I'm not a 2-year-old," Reilly said. "All I'm asking is for them to just be fair to all of us."

Google representatives declined to disclose any specifics on future plans for the site. One employee who asked not to be named explained that the company was giving assistance to only three tenants with more than a year left on their leases.

Exactly what that aid will be remains unclear because tenants who are receiving help say details are still being worked out. One such tenant is the Center of Balance yoga studio, which has operated on Pearl Avenue for 18 years. Owner Karen deMoor said she was acting under a certain degree of trust that Google would take care of her.

"Google has been a good landlord, I'm holding them to their standard of 'Do no evil,'" she said. "In terms of our situation, I'm trusting the process, I think they're going to do the right thing for us."

Perhaps the highest-profile tenant being relocated is the Pear Avenue Theatre, which has been a curious neighbor for the industrial lot since it opened in 2001. Artistic Director Diane Tasca explained that her 40-seat theater was set next week to begin its last production in the current site — Tom Stoppard’s "Arcadia.” She confirmed that with Google’s help the theater would move to a new, larger space somewhere in Mountain View, but said she couldn’t provide details. Tasca is planning to make an announcement about the new site later this month.

"I'm very sentimental, and I'm anticipating it's going to be very strange to perform for the last time and to leave the space," Tasca said. "The new location should be an improvement in a number of ways."

Others have no such plans to start anew in a fresh spot. Perhaps the longest-term tenant working out of the site, Dave Herlinger, said he’ll probably close down his Corvette repair shop after 34 years of business. It wasn’t worth trying to relocate, he said, but he didn’t begrudge Google for pushing him out.

"I'd love to say, 'That darn Google, they're forcing me out.' But honestly, they've been good to me,” Herlinger said. "It's a lot of work, and I'm getting older. I guess you've got to quit sooner or later."  

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Local News

graphic designer

Embarcadero Media, producers of the Palo Alto Weekly, The Almanac, Mountain View Voice, Pleasanton Weekly, PaloAltoOnline.com and several other community websites, is looking for a graphic designer to join its award-winning design team.

Design opportunities include online and print ad design and editorial page layout. Applicant must be fluent in InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator. Flash knowledge is a plus. Newspaper or previous publication experience is preferred, but we will consider qualified — including entry level — candidates. Most importantly, designer must be a team player and demonstrate speed, accuracy and thrive under deadline pressure. The position will be approximately 32 - 40 hours per week.

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Offered at $3,488,000

Gated Craftsman Home, Beautifully Restored

Flaunting period details, this 3 bedroom, 2 bathroom Craftsman-style home of 2,680 sq. ft. (per county) covers a lot of 0.62 acres (per county). Two gates open to a semi-circular driveway, leading to this home adorned with 10-foot coved ceilings, white oak floors, antique fixtures, and picture molding. Pocket doors open to a formal living room with a fireplace and a formal dining room with a bronze stove. The elegantly remodeled kitchen adjoins a butler’s pantry, a walk-in pantry, and a light-filled breakfast room. Three beautiful bedrooms include the master suite, which features two closets, a sunroom, and a newly remodeled bathroom. These gorgeous grounds enjoy large outdoor entertainment areas, plus new landscaping, a fountain, rosebushes, vegetable planters, and a detached garage. Other highlights include an updated hall bathroom and a lower-level bonus room. Walking distance from Caltrain, the home is also steps from Holbrook-Palmer Park and the Atherton Library. Excellent nearby schools like Encinal Elementary (API 930), Hillview Middle (API 950), and Menlo-Atherton High (buyer to verify eligibility).

For video tour & more photos, please visit: www.46FairOaks.com

OPEN HOUSE
Saturday & Sunday, 1-5 pm
Complimentary Lunch & Lattes

Ken DeLeon
CalBRE #01342140
Michael Repka
CalBRE #01854880
111 Pacchetti Way, Mountain View
Offered at $798,000

Bright, Updated Condo Enjoys Prime Location

Complemented by a serene neighborhood with excellent proximity to local amenities, this updated 2 bedroom, 2.5 bathroom tri-level condominium offers 1,080 sq. ft. (per county). Inside, you will find fine, bright spaces lined with dual-pane windows. On the main level, a light-filled living room adjoins a raised sitting area, and the beautiful open kitchen offers a sun-lit dining area, granite countertops, and stainless-steel appliances. Upstairs awaits a bedroom with soaring ceilings, a full bathroom, and a master suite boasting dramatic ceilings and a private bathroom with dual vanities. A half bath and a tandem two-car garage with a laundry area form the lower level. Within this terrific neighborhood, you will enjoy access to three parks and a swimming pool with a spa. The home is within walking distance of San Antonio Shopping Center and the Milk Pail Market, and also nearby Caltrain and Rengstorff Park. Excellent schools include Covington Elementary (API 975), Egan Junior (API 976), and Los Altos High (API 895) (buyer to verify eligibility).

For video tour & more photos, please visit:
www.111Pacchetti.com

OPEN HOUSE
Saturday & Sunday, 1-5 pm
Complimentary Lunch
Los Altos graduates finish strong

By Shannon Chai

For the members of the Los Altos High School class of 2015, being first is nothing new. The graduates, who celebrated their commencement on June 5, were the first students to graduate on the school’s new artificial turf field. According to graduate Allison Crumm, the “mistress of ceremonies,” they were “the first senior class to survive a year of the ‘BYOD’ policy.” The “Bring Your Own Device Policy” requires students to bring a device comparable to a laptop to school for class activities.

And they are the first class whose varsity boys’ basketball team secured the Central Coast Section (CCS) championship title. They were the first to organize a Color Run fundraiser for the athletics program, and the first to host a sustainability conference for schools in the Bay Area. The diversity in the student body could also be seen in the crowd of family and friends in attendance. This year, many went beyond the quintessential balloons and orchid leis and brought on poster-sized cutouts of their graduates’ faces to the ceremony.

Every year, Los Altos High presents the Eagle Award to a few students who have given back to their community during their high school years. The Eagle Award honors students who envision, create, and embrace their diverse communities and demonstrate outstanding scholarship, leadership, and citizenship. Principal Wynne Satterwhite said:

“This year’s Eagle Awards winners were Carly Cohen, Jocelyne Marin-Melo and Ramiel Petros. Before the presentation of the Eagle Awards, student speaker Sami Nassif addressed the crowd: “Graduation signifies an end, but not an opportunity. Instead, it would be called a transition rather than a commencement,” he said.

Email Shannon Chai at schai@mv-voice.com

Los Altos High School

Romy Aboudarham
Mirella Acevedo Perez
Bryan Ackerman
Maya Acharya
Kristen Adams
Ryan Adibi
Gonzalo Aguirre
Andy Alba
Samantha Albert
Aaron Alejo
Michael Alexander
Phillip Almeda
Jose Amaya
Nicholas Ambiel
James Anderson
Rebecca Andrews
Kathia Angel-Pena
Noy Anisman
Carmen Anvelevink
Lawrence Antippora
Alexandr Appel
Alexandra Rose Arce
Julissa Arella Amaya
Nicole Atkins
Akhil Avula
Vishnu Bachani
Noam Baharav
Yuval Baharav
Edward Barnes
Borna Barzin
Makinnon Baugh
Amelia Baumo
Grant Beal
Daniel Beatty
William Berman
Saul Bernal
Guadalupe Bernal Ruiz
Kiana Berube
Nicholas Bianchi
Derek Bilson
Madeline Bourquin
Brandon Choy
Joyce Christianson-Salameh
Crystal Cifuentes
Jorge Coca Castillo
Hunter Coffman
Carly Cohen
Zachariah Cohen
Andre Conceicao
David Conteras Moreno
Spencer Cooley
Tristan Cottrell
Allison Crum
Elizet Cruz-Brao
Jose Cruz-Tinajero
Chang Cui
Kyle Anthony Cumagun
Cayley Cunha
Marina Cunningham
Samantha Dadok
Nicholas Damon
Chase Dan
Rishab Das
Max de Vissers
Elector Del Rio
Michelle Deng
Jasmine Diarte
Maritza Diaz
Katja Dielgers
Daniela Chavez Preciado
Alexandre Chavez-Galeana
Robert Chin
Andrew Chio
Brandon Choy
Leanne Glikharg
Jahan Godrej
Madeleine Goldberg
Alexander Golgbol
Montana Golobef
Anamaria Gomez
Katelyn Gomez
Brigham Gonzalez
Yitzhar Goretsky
Faraz Gorji
Ryan Gottlieb
Joshua Gross
Dane Grovesnor
Jhonseline Guardado
Andreas Guralas
Katherine Sarah Hamilton
Paloma Hamlett
Mohamed Hammoud
Andrea Hansen
Cameron Hayes
Kelly Hayes
Madison Healy
Fiona Heims
Lesley Henriquez
Jose Hernandez Andrade
Cristina Hernandez-Cruz
Victoria Heyman
Jordan Higham
Louis Hinnant
Cayley Ho
Minh Hodges
Thomas Hoke
Brandon Hong
Jennifer Hooper
Aron Horne
Jackson Houde
William Howard
Leya Hu
Timothy Hsu
Hasan Iqbal
Natalia Izaguirre Cabrera
Elise Jacobsen
Sruity Jayakumar
Andre Jenab
Sabrina Johnson
Ricardo Juarez Benito
Riley Kahan
Andrew Kang
Mikalo Kasha
Noelani Kawakami
Tallulah Kay
Thomas Kelleher
Shane Kennerly
Daniel Kharlamov
Bijan Khosrovani
Amber Kim
Bryan Kim
Malden Klein
Jackson Klepper
Soo Bin Ko
Eric Kopp
Eliza Koulkova
Margaret Koulkova
Dylan Kreisman
Brendan Kreppchin
Elizabeth Kristian
Henry Kwoc
William La Poll
Ryan Lahey
Jason Lai
Timothy Lam
Brianna Lane
Sean Lanoza
Maria LaO’
Sadali Larbi
Kathy Le
Thuy Tien Le
Carter Lee
James Lee
Megan Lee
Ethan Leikach
Jason Leong
Albert Li
Elizabeth Li
Elvis Li
Kevin Li
Sui Chung Menson Li
Charles Lien
Zheng Lim
Jeffrey Liu
Katherine Liu
Kristen Liu
Alexandra Lopez
Issaia Lopez
Betsy Lopez Ramirez
Andrea Lucia
Perla Luna
Christopher Lyle
Toby Maculuso
Arndt Maclaus
Victor Macias
Ian Mackey
Timothy Maddalena
Liliana Maldonado
Reyes Maldonado-Espinosa
Olivia Mann
Alexander Mao
Jocelyne Marin-Melo
Oscar Martinez
Luis Martinez Galvan
Anna Martirosyan
Whitney Matthews
Patrick McColl
Kayla McHenry
Niamh McLoughlin
Anna McShane
Tala Mehdipour
Cesar Mejia
Bryan Melo-Alvarado
Karen Mendez
Carlos Mendoza
Sarah Merrick
Valentim Mestman
Dana Meyerson
Alexandra Milkey
Nicole Miller
Rachael Miller
Julia Mitchell
Allison Mock
Gustaf Mollerstedt
Julia Morgans
Riley Moulds
Kenneth Mousavian
Kathryn Mueller
Brittany Mungan
Santiago Munoz
Maria Munoz Yepez
Ashley Musick
Michael Mylen

Kori Robinson fixes a friend’s tie before Los Altos High School’s graduation ceremony on June 5.
A family waves a poster-sized photo as graduates meet up with loved ones after Los Altos High School’s commencement ceremony.

Ulises Narango
Sami Nasif
Melissa Navarro
Nima Nezami
Sean Nguyen
Chelsea Nivison
Daniel Noel
Nicholas Nordquist
Hilla Novat
Sean Ondert
Oliva Olivares Rivera
Annaka Olsen
Joseph Nathan Ong
Arlene Oreil
Eric Orozco Martinez
Anaaida Osipova
Laurel O’She
Jina Park
Sungmin Park
Megan Parr
Kunal Patel
Nimisha Pattada
Daniel Pelley
Christian Perez
Emma Perry
Ramiel Petros
Anthony Pineda
Christopher Poulsen
Zachary Pozzi
Gerardo Primitivo Casas
William Pye
Daniel Rabin
Jumu Radford
Clara Ramirez
Kate Ramirez
Brian Randall
Philip Randall
Iris Rhee
Alberto Rivera
Kori Robinson-Griffin
Randy Rodriguez
Adrian Romero
Daniel Rosenbaum
Noah Rushion
Evan Ryder
Neuka Salehi
Roya Samani
Edgar Sanchez Lopez
Lesley Sandoval-Medina
Ian Sans
Victoria Santiago
Joshua Aaron Santos
Arthur Sartor
Samuel Sauerhaft
Kaitlyn Schiffhauer
Jonas Schill
Matthew Schoner
Kenneth Schriner
Shauna Schultz
Farris Scott
Tess Seltzer
Ignacio Seni
Gabriella Shab
Oliver Shen
Kaitlin Shorts
Shahzeb Shunaid
Shanzeh Shunaid
Jocelyn Silva Buenrostro
Jasmeen Singh
Michelle Sit
Sam Skinner
Alexandre Smirnov
Mariana Smith
Vera Sobol
Alondra Soto
Meredith Soward
Nathan Straussvan
Ammitha Sriram
Sitara Sriram
Jared Steck
Lauren Stoops
Elena Strawn
Alexandria Stynor
Christopher Stynor
Matthew Sucharchuk
Edgar Tapia Mendoza
Kazaid Taraporevala
Kiyoishi Taylor
Eleanor Thomas
Michele Tom
Jasminyesn Townsend
Amy Tran
Jessica Trout
Tenille Trujillo
Ashwin Vaidyanathan
Kevin Van Dyke
Molly Vanderly
Maya Varghese
Diana Vazquez
Dayana Vega Moreno
Nicole Vendeln
Sigrid Viera
Rita Villanueva
Michael Conrad Viray
Kateryna Voituk
Anna Wang
Brian Wang
Lawrence Wang
Yuji Wang
Emily Webb
Kael Weinre
Abigail Williams
Emma Wilson
Aaron Wong
Ryan Wong
Summer Wong
David Wu
Michael Wu
Ryan Wu
Alvin Xu
Michelle Yau
Brian Yeager
Akemi Yoshida
Casey Young
Ophelia Yue
Katelyn Yurus
Brandon Zavala
Karon Zellers
Annie Zhang
Liya Zhu
Dylan Zorn

Todd Pearson, a teacher at Alta Vista High School, embraces graduate Isaiah Harrison after the commencement ceremony as his grandmother Delia Harrison wipes away tears.

Success comes from adversity for Alta Vista grads

Graduation day for Alta Vista High School feels like any other, with the black caps, the gowns, the tassels and the tear-eyed parents holding up signs and cheering.

But for many of the 22 students graduating from the continuation high school this year, turning that tassel from the right to the left means they’ve conquered adversity. Graduating in the class of 2015 may have felt like a distant chance just years ago. Alta Vista graduate Elijah Martinez told the standing-room only crowd in the school’s multipurpose room that life throws curve balls, and it’s important to persevere. He said he fell off course when his father suffered a traumatic brain injury in a motorcycle crash, and it wasn’t clear if he would walk or talk again. He said he got re-routed to Alta Vista High School and told he was not on track to graduate.

Martinez was able to turn things around in just a year and a half at Alta Vista, and graduated along with the rest of the class of 2015. His father, likewise, was able to bouncing back well enough to walk, talk and even pester him like any other dad.

“Graduating from Alta Vista means a lot. We have accomplished what others thought was impossible for us,” Martinez said.

Martinez was not alone. Graduating senior Amarilys Cruz Ortega said, “Everyone is studying because they want a good college and they want a good job. That’s what was going on in my head. I would support me.”

Martinez was able to turn things around at Alta Vista.

The graduation ceremony also gave students the chance to make shout-outs to their favorite teachers, and just about every one of them gave an honorable mention to Dowling. Pierce said the students adore Dowling and have given her all sorts of monikers over the years, including “Mama Dowling” and “The Angel of Alta Vista.”

“The (school) has become a second home,” Asommodinov said. “I’m confident that if I failed, that others would support me.”

Superintendent Barry Groves emphasized to the parents and relatives in attendance that Alta Vista is one of the top continuation high schools in the country, in the top percentile, and that the campus has an excellent learning environment with a solid focus on academics.

“Everyone is studying because they know if they don’t do the work, they won’t get any credit,” Groves said.

This is the last graduation with Groves as superintendent of the Mountain View-Los Altos High School District. While plenty of iterations of the continuation high school preceded his time leading the district, he said he took over as superintendent during the infancy of Alta Vista High School.

Since then, he said, the school has gone from a “credit-recovery” school for juniors and seniors to a more comprehensive program that serves all grades, including the recent addition of a freshman class.

The district also lengthened the school day and the school year to be on par with other, more traditional high schools, and has since added a construction program, a computer applications program and a health science curriculum.

The graduation ceremony also gave students the chance to make shout-outs to their favorite teachers, and just about every one of them gave an honorable mention to Dowling. Pierce said the students adore Dowling and have given her all sorts of monikers over the years, including “Mama Dowling” and “The Angel of Alta Vista.”

“(Dowling) tells the kids they love them and she demonstrates it daily,” Pierce said. “The kids feel valued. Any time graduates thank the staff members, her name will come up.”

Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com

Alta Vista High School

Azizkhuja Asommodinov
Maria Pati Barcenas
Amarilys Cruz Ortega
Serio Delgado
Suzanne Emery-Sbar
Teuala Fifita
Maria Garibay
Isaiah Harrison
Anthony Hernandez
Monzerat Hernandez
Bo Joan-Bendien
Christine Kennedy
Brenden Lopez
Elijah Martinez
Alexandra McCarthy
Gabriel McNern
Mayra Medina-Orosco
Zochil Moreno-Martinez

Jeff Sanchez
Jocelyn Trujillo
Seloini Vai
Marina Yamamoto

Jocelyn Trujillo tries to hold back tears during Alta Vista High School’s graduation ceremony on June 3.

June 12, 2015 • Mountain View Voice • MountainViewOnline.com
(The students) are driven to be the best that they can be in the classroom,” Grissom said. “The Spartan Theatre stage could barely hold the number of students with a 4.5 GPA.”

The class also had its fair share of musicians who won awards and trophies in the school’s band, as well as student engineers in the robotics club who designed, crafted, and strategized their way to international finals during their junior and senior years, Grissom said.

Graduating senior Alexandria Malo said the class of 2015 is anything but one-dimensional, and reflected on how she and her fellow classmates have been able to craft their own individuality throughout their high school years as environmentalists, athletes, academics and engineers, each with distinct memories and different experiences.

Malo said the drive to be different from one another and find purpose in life reminded her of what a student once told her about the conservation of matter. The teacher said that while matter can only change and cannot be created or destroyed, there is one caveat — human creativity. It’s through creativity and thoughts that people can find new creation, development, and purpose, Malo said.

The high school diploma may not do much to set students apart from another, she said, but their own ideas and innovations are what makes them unique. Assistant Principal William Blair said the graduating class has been active on the campus and in the community since the first day of freshman year, jumping on opportunities to start new clubs and getting involved in community service activities. He said the students started and supported socially conscious clubs like Athletes for Athletics, which works with the Special Olympics and other organizations to help raise awareness on what it’s like to live with disabilities.

The students were also pioneers for some of the school’s STEM programs. Blair said, including newly-added computer science classes and STEM week, which greatly expanded beyond the annual “Hour of Code” event.

Grissom also commended the school staff for earning the Gold Ribbon Award this year for its strides towards narrowing the achievement gap, including getting more underrepresented minorities into rigorous academic classes. Grissom gave credit to the teaching staff for their “continued foresight and dedication in the district.”

Senior class president Leo Hsia also recognized the relatives, family members and friends, many of them in the crowd that evening, for being behind the students every step of the way.

“None of us would’ve been able to overcome the obstacles,” Hsia said. Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com
Caps fly as Mountain View High School wraps up its graduation ceremony.

Rudy Segura
MountainViewOnline.com
June 12, 2015
with the designs and the vision for the new school. She also supported the choice to expand the campus and add the long-called-for student capacity for 900 students split between the traditional program and Dual Immersion.

"For years the Castro community has asked for more classrooms so that all of the students in the neighborhood can attend their neighborhood school," Wheeler said. "This neighborhood, more than any in the city, has a bunch of kids who can only walk to school. The only other way they get to school is by taking the bus."

Board president Chris Chiang said he was excited to see the plans, which he said would help turn Castro into a "21st century school." But he said he was hesitant to throw his full support behind the plan because he feared that expanding enrollment at Castro could come back to haunt the district. If the district expects to add 150 students to the current student body, he said, those kids have to come from somewhere, and Landels and Monte Loma schools can’t take that kind of hit to their enrollment.

"Others questioned whether it would be a good idea to put 900 kids on one campus at all," Board member Greg Coladonato said. "Our goal is to not be in buildings that look like they were built in the 1950s," Lambert said.

"There’s an issue of equality to me — why does this neighborhood get it?" he said. The sliding glass doors, among other things, were added to the designs by the architect after taking input from school staff, Parent-Teacher Association representatives and other community members over several meetings beginning in January. Castro Principal Theresa Lambert said teachers and staff at the school are in the midst of improving Castro’s academic programs, and part of that includes being more “innovative” in the way they teach. Having these flexible walls encourages more open collaboration and opens up more opportunities for the teachers, she said. "Our goal is to not be in buildings that looked like they were built in the 1950s," Lambert said.

In November, the Castro Restructuring Task Force reported that students in the traditional program lag behind Dual Immersion students by a large margin in math as well as English and language arts. About 81 percent of the students in the traditional program are English-language learners who come from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Construction of the new traditional program classrooms is expected to begin summer 2016. The board will be asked to approve the design for the first phase of construction next fall. The overall site plans presented last week will come back to the board at a June 24 special meeting for approval.

Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com
higher risk of exposure, and it could prevent me from trying to be pregnant.” A 2010 report from the EPA declared that TCE is cancer-causing, or carcinogenic, to humans “by almost any route of entry.” TCE is known to cause other health problems, including heart defects in children born to mothers who were exposed to it during critical stages of heart development, according to the EPA.

Speaking at the council meeting on Tuesday, Parenteau urged the council to hold off on approving the project until more clean-up efforts for the TCE contamination are finished. But site owner Bruce Panchal dismissed those concerns, pointing out that he was a longtime resident of the site for 42 years and raised three children there. In fact, he described his background as a former engineer at Fairchild Semiconductor, the company responsible for causing the TCE contamination. He gave assurances that the chemical would dissipate and be rendered harmless once it was vented out.

“I’ve lived there for 42 years, and I’m a healthy person. My wife and I have four children. There was a hot spot and my kids are fine,” he said. “It’s not Fukushima or Chernobyl. You can remedy this by purging it out.”

However, Councilman Ken Rosenberg asked whether the proposed new housing would improve the toxic hazards at the site. Zoning administrator Gabriel said the site already had clean-up efforts that would go forward regardless of the new project. During construction, the site would have a soil-management plan and air monitoring, as well as a system of “appropriate” response actions if any TCE levels were detected, said EPA project manager Alanee Lee.

Adding a special condition to the site, Rosenberg asked for any prospective home buyers to be explicitly warned about the TCE contamination. The plans to redevelop the ramshackle site also raised larger concerns about the affordability problems affecting Mountain View and the lack of cheap housing. The site currently consists of a shuttered convenience store, two houses and a 25-room motel that for years has operated as single-room-occupancy housing, which would all be demolished as part of the proposal. The site is one block from another of Mountain View’s more affordable rental housing options; the RV park that is slated to be replaced by row houses costing about $900,000 each.

Presenting the subdivision plans to the city, Rodger Miller of Waterman Residential, described how his firm’s proposal would transform an “under-utilized” property into a showpiece neighborhood. None of the homes would be set aside as affordable housing, but Miller said a portion of the sales revenue would go to the city’s affordable housing fund. The motel is still occupied by residents, some of whom have lived there for more than 10 years, according to one public speaker. Even though the rooms are being rented out as permanent housing, city staff reported that motels are specifically exempt from renter protections mandated by the city’s housing relocation ordinance. One councilman criticized this as essentially being a “loophole in the city’s ordinance.”

Anticipating a pitfall that could compromise his company’s plans, Miller made a pledge on the spot that all residents at the site would be given an equivalent sum to what they would have received under the housing ordinance. That sum would amount to about $6,000 per household, with more for families with children or special-need situations. City leaders approved the plans in a unanimous vote.

The remaining 60 said they were considering a mix of other options including private school or an intradistrict transfer to a different public school. Fortuna Ridge View School District board member Roger Noel took an even more aggressive stance, saying if the school board did not start the process of opening a new school immediately, he would not only drop his support for future parcel taxes and bond measures, but would vow to actively fight against them.

While board members mostly held off on comments until then, many parents said they’re looking at other options. Tyrella resident Ken Brent said the district put his family in “quite a dilemma” and that he’s being forced to either transfer to another school in the district, send his kids to a private school or move to another area.

“None of these are attractive for our family,” Brent said. “What we need is a top-quality school in our neighborhood for our kids to attend.”

In a survey by the Reopen Slater group, only four of the 64 parents surveyed in the re-zoned area said they were considering sending children to Theuerkauf.

At the heart of the task force’s decision to not recommend a new school was limited enrollment, both now and in the future, in the Mountain View Whisman School District. Projected student numbers in the district’s 32-page demographic report shows enrollment flattening out and even declining in the next ten years.

Hongxu Cai, a member of the group, said it doesn’t make a lot of sense to assume enrollment in Mountain View public schools is poised to drop when the very same report expects the overall student population to increase. What’s more, he said, the latest batch of kindergartners enrolled in 2015 shows the district has already started off strong with about 100 new students this year, higher than originally predicted.

Others argued the report was far too conservative in the way it assessed student generation rates based on the type of housing developments. Tamara Wilson, another Reopen Slater member, said single-family attached homes were given the relatively low student-generation rate of .057 kids per home in the demographic study. But when they ran their own survey of families in the area, they found a rate more than twice as high.

Elizabeth Riley, a parent in the area, is one of those families. She told the board she moved into a single-family attached home in the Whisman neighborhood and had three kids at the time. “It’s just as plenty of others have done. Faced with possible having to send her kid to Theuerkauf, she fears they may have to switch to a private school.

Beyond the numbers, Wilson said the Whisman and Slater neighborhood areas continue to be overlooked in soliciting public input. The Boundary Advisory Task Force, which lacked a single representative from the Registrar, is an example of how the neighborhood’s lack of a school or PTA prevents them from mobilizing and influencing district decisions.

“The district” pulls apart our neighborhood because we lack a voice, we lack a central school and a PTA with their finger on the pulse of community issues,” Wilson said.

The projects are partially funded by the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority’s (VTA) Local Road Improvement and Repair Program. This program is funded by the $10 increase in Vehicle Registration Fees approved by the Santa Clara County voters in a November 2010 ballot measure (Measure B).

You are invited to the following Mountain View City Council meeting where the Council will consider approval of the project:

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2015
6:30 PM. (OR AS SOON THEREAFTER AS THE ITEM CAN BE HEARD)
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
SECOND FLOOR, MOUNTAIN VIEW CITY HALL
500 CASTRO STREET, MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA

If the project is approved by Council, construction is scheduled to begin September 2015.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Joy Houghton, Project Manager, at (650) 903-6311 or joy.houghton@mountainview.gov.
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City moves forward on plan for cleaner electricity

What do environmental and community leaders do when the giant corporation that supplies most of Northern California’s energy drags its feet as customers clamor for clean and renewable sources of electricity? They boldly move forward to find solutions independent of Pacific Gas and Electric, as Mountain View leaders are now doing.

The City Council last week agreed, with only John Ink opposed, to pursue what’s known as a community-choice aggregation — or CCA — a system that would allow residents and businesses to tap into sources of renewable energy at what is likely to be a lower cost. Mountain View would partner with Santa Clara County and the cities of Sunnyvale and Cupertino to create the system, bypassing PG&E as an electric utility provider, although still relying on the corporation for gas, energy distribution and maintenance of the power grid.

Councilwoman Pat Showalter neatly summed up one of the benefits of such a system: “This is a way for us to push the state and PG&E to require more greenhouse reduction by changing the portfolio for everyone. If there were lots of these community-choice energy projects, it would force PG&E to offer similar portfolios.”

But the pressure exerted on PG&E as more customers turn to CCA systems isn’t the only selling point of the plan. The immediate environmental benefits of drawing electricity from renewable sources — such as solar, wind and bio-energy — on a large enough scale are undeniable.

And given that such an effort’s scale must be a factor in the equation if a true impact is to be felt, skeptics might want to take a look at what’s going on elsewhere in the state, particularly in the Bay Area. The first community-choice aggregation system in the state was put in place in Marin County in 2010, with PG&E pulling out all the stops to fight it. That program, known as Marin Clean Energy, has resulted in some 125,000 customers being supplied with electricity from renewable sources, according to the program’s website. And, for customers who choose a plan that guarantees that half of their electricity is from clean sources, the price tag is about 18 percent cheaper than if the energy had come from PG&E. More expensive plans provide electricity entirely from clean sources.

Since Marin County blazed the trail, similar programs have been put in place in Sonoma County and in at least one Southern California community. And about 20 additional counties and numerous cities in the state, including San Francisco, are vigorously exploring the community-choice aggregation option.

So Mountain View, if it follows through with the CCA partnership to provide cleaner and cheaper electricity to its residents, will be joining a growing force for change in how energy is produced and consumed in California.

At last week’s council meeting, city staff rightly pointed out that a CCA program could also carry risks. For one, with the burgeoning interest in creating CCAs, the sheer number of participants could nudge up the costs of renewable electricity. But that risk shouldn’t stop the move toward creating a system that supports a healthier environment and keeps the pressure on PG&E to develop its own renewable energy options that would allow customers in areas where CCAs might be less feasible to participate in the clean-energy effort.

 ELECTRIFIED TRAINS NEED MORE BIKE CAPACITY

As a frequent Caltrain rider I’m convinced that an electrified Caltrain is a cornerstone of the Bay Area’s future transportation plans.

In recent years, the number of “bicycle bumps” has grown alarmingly. Despite earlier promises that the electrification project would bring relief, I’m disappointed to hear there’s no proposal to increase bicycle capacity on the electrified Caltrain. This worries me greatly — not only for my own commute, but especially for Caltrain’s long-term business model. Bicycle ridership constitutes a quick increasing percentage of its customer base. Furthermore, Caltrain’s ability to carry bicycles takes cars off the road and relieves overcrowded bus lines.

I’m certainly aware of the need to balance various groups of riders when planning its business, and I understand that Caltrain frequently finds itself in a predicament as a result. Nevertheless, I urge Caltrain to greatly increase bicycle carrying capacity on the electrified system. Increasing bicycle capacity on Caltrain benefits not only its bicycle-riding customers. The improved traffic and environmental factors that result benefit all of society, while participants could nudge up the costs of renewable electricity. But that risk shouldn’t stop the move toward creating a system that supports a healthier environment and keeps the pressure on PG&E to develop its own renewable energy options. The ‘Net metering’ needs to be extended

Regarding your article (June 5, regarding clean-energy alternative):

I am a college student who is passionate about the future of solar. A change in the energy market is important — especially if it allows more communities to adopt solar energy.

I am writing to you because there is an important battle that is coming up at the California Public Utilities Commission, and will be decided this year, regarding net metering (giving fair credit to solar customers on their utility bills). It will have a huge impact on the future of rooftop solar. The soon-to-be debated issue has to do with whether net metering will be available for new solar customers in our state, after the cap that will sunset the program starting in 2017. The utilities are trying to block the growth of rooftop solar because they see it as a threat to their old way of doing business. But Californians shouldn’t stand for that! Readers should contact the CPUC and ask the agency to extend net metering into the future.

Abigail Black
San Francisco

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Bret Hembree
Crew Foreman
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