

Mountain View VOICE

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MOVIES | 30



COURTESY OF CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

Google's Charleston East campus plans call for a public promenade through its center. The design met with enthusiasm from Mountain View city officials Tuesday.

Google's futuristic plan wins cheers from city

COUNCIL HAS PRAISE FOR DESIGN, CONCERNS ABOUT PARKING, TREE ISSUES

By Mark Noack

Mountain View City Council members signaled their approval for what would easily be the city's most dramatic office

building. Google on Tuesday presented the eye-catching plans for its Charleston East site, which call for glass walls, a public walkway running through the center and a huge solar array draping the struc-

ture in place of a roof.

The futuristic plans for Google's first self-designed campus were given an initial review by Mountain View officials at a March 29 study session, about one year after they were first made public and drew worldwide attention. The response from City Council members and the public was largely celebratory, and many heaped praise on the design saying it would be a showpiece

► See **GOOGLE**, page 6

New homework policy aims to ease teen stress

DRAFT POLICY WOULD LIMIT HOURS SPENT ON SCHOOLWORK OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

By Kevin Forestieri

Calling it a key strategy for reducing stress and anxiety among high school students in a highly competitive environment, officials in the Mountain View-Los Altos High School District are moving full-steam ahead on new policies designed to cap the number of hours students

spend on homework.

The latest iteration of the policy lays down a concrete framework for how much homework constitutes a burden on students, and when students ought to get a break. Among the proposed changes, the draft policy calls for a maximum of two to three hours of homework per class per week for normal classes, and four to five hours for advanced

placement (AP) courses.

The limits still leave a broad range of time students could spend on homework each week. An ambitious class schedule with multiple AP classes, for example, could add up to more than 20 hours of work outside of class time — and that's on top of any after-school sports or extracurricular activities.

Under the draft policy, teachers would be required not to assign homework over the summer or the December break, and would be discouraged from assigning work over Thanksgiving, the February break and the April break. Homework on weekends

► See **HOMEWORK**, page 10



Meet the Assembly candidates

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Disarray at the Dojo

HACKER DOJO FACING INTERNAL UNREST, CREDIT CARD MISUSE AND A MOVE TO A NEW LOCATION

By Mark Noack

Hacker Dojo, Mountain View's one-of-a-kind workshop for start-ups and makers, could be facing the biggest challenge to its survival to date. Just weeks before it must relocate to a new space, the scrappy hacker club is dealing with a leadership crisis amid allegations of misuse of funds by a staffer.

Feuds and clashing personalities are nothing new at Hacker Dojo, which has long attracted a membership that's both smart and headstrong. But in recent weeks, the internal controversy has reached a boiling point, following news that a Hacker Dojo staffer had racked up what could be tens of thousands of dollars in personal expenses on the nonprofit's credit card.

While the Dojo's directors and its hundreds of members roundly condemned the theft, critics are saying that the board members have become secretive and dragged their heels on implementing proposals to prevent future problems.

The chief critic calling for

greater board transparency and reform until recently was a sitting director herself. Sudarshana "Sophie" Banerjee, 38, who joined the five-member board in January and just announced her resignation this week, would seem a model member of Hacker Dojo. A former journalist from India who joined the group two years ago, she credits the close-knit community with kindling her love for coding and robotics. She still brims with enthusiasm when she describes the spirit of the group.

"When you're in this environment, it just makes you want to build stuff," she said. "The Dojo is a place that embraces geeks and founders. You can be homeless, live out of your car and start your company out of the Dojo."

One of Banerjee's first actions on the board was to request bank records to see how the nonprofit was spending its money. It turns out that she was first director to ask for these records in years, and up until that point, the board treasurer had essentially been an

► See **HACKER DOJO**, page 8



VOICE FILE PHOTO

Jun Wong works at the reception desk at Hacker Dojo on Sept. 1, 2015.

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**JUDY
BOGARD-TANIGAMI**

650.207.2111

judybt@apr.com

CalBRE# 00298975

**SHERI
BOGARD-HUGHES**

650.279.4003

shughes@apr.com

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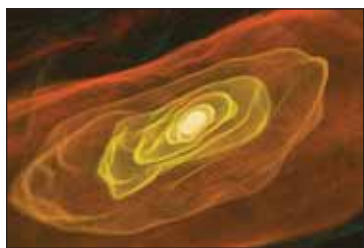
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COURTESY OF FOOTHILL COLLEGE

Physicist Tom Abel will discuss the universe's early stages at Foothill College.

SILICON VALLEY ASTRONOMY LECTURE

Stanford University physicist Dr. Tom Abel will give a free, illustrated, non-technical talk on "How Things in the Universe Came About and How They Ended Up Within Us" on Wednesday, April 6, at 7 p.m. in the Smithwick Theater at Foothill College, 12345 El Monte Road, Los Altos Hills. Abel will discuss the early stages of the universe, using the latest computer animations of how the first stars formed and died, and how stars built up the first galaxies. The event is free; parking is \$3. Go to foothill.edu/news/newsfmt.php?sr=2&rec_id=4299.

WINNIE BRAVE

Winnie Brave, a "porch-stompin' Americana/Roots duo" composed of Canadian husband-and-wife team Amy (vocals/guitar) and Brad (bass/percussion/keys) McIsaac, will bring their act to Red Rock Coffee, 201 Castro St. in Mountain View for a free show on Friday, April 1. With their two dogs, two guitars, two amplifiers and two favorite coffee mugs, the couple tours full time from a trusty 1976 Winnebago. Go to winniebrave.com.



COURTESY OF WINNIE BRAVE

Canadian husband-and-wife duo Winnie Brave perform Americana music at Red Rock Coffee.

LOCAL AUTHORS FESTIVAL

Eight local authors will present their work at the Palo Alto City Library's free Local Authors Fair at the Rinconada Library, 1213 Newell Road, on Sunday, April 3, 2-5 p.m. The authors, including SuAnn and Kevin Kiser ("Sherman the Sheep"); Jacqueline Stewart ("Parks and Gardens in Greater Paris") and John Orr ("Someone Dark Has Found Me"), are all part of the library's Local Interest Collection, for books set in Palo Alto or written by Palo Alto authors. Go to www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/depts/lib/.

'D.I.Y. CATSKILLS JEWISH JOKEFEST'

Tell a joke and have a chuckle at the D.I.Y. Catskills Jewish Jokefest on Saturday, April 2, at the Oshman Family JCC, Schultz Cultural Arts Hall, 3921 Fabian Way, Palo Alto. Adults age 21 and older are invited to share jokes, with bragging rights given to the best and worst knee-slappers. Admission is \$15 general; \$10 joke tellers and includes a drink ticket and dessert. The yuk-fest starts runs 7-10 p.m. Go to paloaltojcc.org/Events/diy-catskills-jewish-jokefest.



CATCH 22

Bryan Moriarty, Gary Landis and Joe Antonicelli perform in "Catch 22" at the Bus Barn Theater.

'CATCH-22'

Los Altos Stage Company will produce "Catch-22," a play based on Joseph Heller's classic novel about a man desperate to find a way out of the absurdity of war. The show runs April 7-May 1, Wednesdays-Saturdays, 8 p.m.; Sundays, 3 p.m. \$18-\$36, at Bus Barn Theater, 97 Hillview Ave., Los Altos. Go to losaltosstage.org/. —Karla Kane

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■ CRIME BRIEFS

WOMAN ARRESTED FOR ALLEGEDLY USING COUNTERFEIT MONEY

A 31-year-old Vallejo woman was arrested in Mountain View over the weekend after she allegedly tried to use counterfeit bills at a local business, and attacked an employee who pursued her when she tried to flee.

Police say Melinda Pecar had tried to make a purchase at a business on the 1200 block of West El Camino Real shortly before 10 a.m. on March 26. When an employee of the business called police to report the use of counterfeit bills, Pecar allegedly tried to leave, according to police spokeswoman Katie Nelson.

Pecar and the employee got into a struggle, during which Pecar allegedly bit the employee's arm repeatedly. Officers later detained Pecar, and arrested her on charges of battery with serious injury, possession of a controlled substance and fraud.

Officers also detained Vacaville resident Antoinette Florez, who had gone to the store with Pecar and was waiting nearby next to a car. Florez was arrested on several charges unrelated to the altercation inside the business, including parole violation, possession of drug paraphernalia and possession of a controlled substance. She was booked into the Elmwood Correctional Facility in Milpitas without bail.

VANDALISM ARREST

Police arrested a transient man last week after he allegedly damaged a flag pole near the intersection of El Camino Real and Castro Street.

Witnesses say the man, 31-year-old Daniel Bobba, was allegedly pushing and pulling a city flag pole along El Camino Real around 5 p.m. on Friday, March 25. The motion caused the pole to lean over and crack near the base, according to police spokeswoman Katie Nelson.

Bobba was arrested for felony vandalism, and was booked into Santa Clara County Main Jail on a \$10,000 bail.

—Kevin Forestieri

■ POLICE LOG

ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY WEAPON

200 block Castro St., 3/27

AUTO BURGLARY

800 block Heatherstone Way, 3/23
1200 block Dale Av., 3/28
900 block Bonita Av., 3/28
100 block Mayfield Av., 3/29

BATTERY

2500 block Grant Rd., 3/23
200 block Castro St., 3/26

BATTERY WITH SERIOUS INJURY

1200 block W. El Camino Real

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

200 block San Antonio Rd., 3/23
100 block Castro St., 3/24
900 block W. Middlefield Rd., 3/24
100 block E. El Camino Real, 3/25
900 block Castro St., 3/27

GRAND THEFT

2400 block W. Middlefield Rd., 3/23

900 block San Pierre Way, 3/23
600 block Showers Dr., 3/24
400 block N. Shoreline Blvd., 3/26
1900 block W. El Camino Real, 3/26
800 block Yuba Dr., 3/28
2400 block Old Middlefield Way., 3/28
700 block Continental Cir., 3/29

RESIDENTIAL BURGLARY

800 block Sylvan Av., 3/23
100 block N. Rengstorff Av., 3/23
1200 block California St., 3/24
900 block Bonita Av., 3/28

ROBBERY

600 block San Antonio Rd., 3/28

STOLEN VEHICLE

700 block Continental Cir., 3/25
1900 block Latham St., 3/26

VANDALISM

2100 block W. El Camino Real, 3/23
1000 block N. Rengstorff Av., 3/23
Castro St. & W. El Camino Real, 3/25
Bentley Sq. & Grant Rd., 3/29

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MICHELLE LE

Chef Bob Mencimer stands outside the kitchen at Crittenden Middle School on March 29.

District spends big to fix up school lunches

KITCHEN IMPROVEMENTS AND BETTER FOOD IS EXPECTED TO BRING DISTRICT BACK IN THE BLACK

By Kevin Forestieri

It's a little hard to spot, but right next door to all the bustling construction going on at Crittenden Middle School is a culinary powerhouse churning out hundreds of scones, pancakes and muffins. The breakfast food — all made from scratch — will be shipped off the next morning to feed thousands of kids in Mountain View schools.

Crittenden's kitchen is the food preparation site for the Mountain View Whisman School District, and has been changing fast in recent years. Prepackaged and heavily processed foods have been ditched in favor of local, fresh ingredients, and sleek new industrial-grade cooking equipment lines the kitchen interior. It hasn't been cheap, but district officials say it's the best way to get kids lined up and excited for school

lunch — and the only way to get the food services budget back on track.

Starting this year, the district's child nutrition budget went into investment mode. The most recent interim budget report shows that the district expects to spend \$300,000 on food services equipment, including new refrigerators, large tilting skillets, salad bars and a massive kettle capable of cooking up pasta for thousands of students. Although the food services budget has typically floated around \$2 million each year, this year it's popping up an extra \$500,000.

A report from 2014 shows that the school lunch program

► See **SCHOOL LUNCHES**, page 7

Ramirez enters race for City Council

By Mark Noack

He's young, but it's hard to argue that Lucas Ramirez lacks the passion for politics, or the patience.

A presence at almost every City Council meeting, the 27-year-old Mountain View resident is a civics dynamo — at any given session he may be collecting signatures for candidates or speaking on behalf of a particular group, as well as taking meeting notes for the local League of Women Voters. For four-, five- or sometimes six-hour meetings, Ramirez can be found glued to his seat, watching attentively as city officials deliberate the arcane points of land-use, housing or whatever else is on the agenda.

"I've always had an interest in politics," he said. "It's a matter of one thing leading to another — my nature is to be curious and to learn about things."

In his quest to embrace local government, Ramirez is now stepping up to the main event. This week, he announced his candidacy for City Council in the November election, saying he would make housing affordability his campaign's central issue.

"If we continue moving in a direction where housing becomes more extreme and less attainable, we're going to be an exclusive gated community or a company town," he said. "People are being priced out, and a goal of mine is to ensure that people

have an opportunity here."

This November, Mountain View will have four council seats up for election; they are currently held by John Inks, John McAlister, Chris Clark and Mike Kasperzak. Both Inks and Kasperzak will be termed out of office and prohibited from running for another consecutive term. McAlister and Clark have yet to formally announce whether they plan to run for re-election.

On the whole, Ramirez praised the recent work of sitting council members to address the housing issue, including green-lighting a dramatic increase in citywide housing development. However, he noted, most benefits from the added housing stock will be years away and more immediate action would be helpful.

Where he differs from much of the council is on the topic of rent control. While reviled by landlord advocates, formal rental-market regulations could provide the immediate relief needed for struggling renters, Ramirez said.

The council's recent rejection of a proposal for binding arbitration between landlords and tenants — which some characterized as soft rent control — would have been an "appropriate" plan to help renters, he said.

"Some kind of short-term relief is appropriate," he said. "I'm not going to say that rent stabiliza-

► See **RAMIREZ**, page 7

How to parent a successful student

GRAHAM MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASS TEACHES NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING PARENTS HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR THEIR KIDS

By Kevin Forestieri

More than 100 parents and students packed the Graham Middle School multipurpose room Tuesday night for a special kind of graduation. To the sound of rolling applause, 67 Graham parents approached the stage, one by one, to accept a certificate from school staff while their families

cheered them on.

It may sound like a curious role-reversal, but to the Latino families graduating from Graham's Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE) program this week, the ceremony marks a big change in the way they treat public education.

The PIQE program is an 11-week class designed to teach families speaking English as

a second language all the ins-and-outs of the public education system. The program plays a key role in helping parents advocate for their children, get more involved in the classroom, and understand what their students need to do in order to succeed through high school and beyond.

Every Tuesday for the last 11

► See **PARENTS**, page 10



COURTESY OF LUCAS RAMIREZ

Lucas Ramirez, 27, is running for a seat on the City Council.

Head of CHAC resigns suddenly

NAOMI NAKANO-MATSUMOTO ENDS TENURE AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Kevin Forestieri

The head of the Community Health Awareness Council (CHAC) resigned late last week after serving as the nonprofit agency's executive director for less than a year.

Naomi Nakano-Matsumoto quietly left her position as head of the agency on Wednesday, March 23. The CHAC board of directors announced the appointment of Paul Schutz, CHAC's development director, as the interim

executive director on Friday.

Sandy Bergan, CHAC's board chair, said Nakano-Matsumoto announced her decision to resign at the board meeting on Wednesday last week, and that the board is still figuring out how to kick off the search for the next executive director. She said it was Nakano-Matsumoto's decision to resign, and she couldn't comment further on a personnel issue.

Schutz said he'll be filling in during the shift in leadership, and that CHAC is in a "bridge

period." Schutz has served for 16 years as development director at CHAC, and said he has served as chief financial officer for other organizations as well.

"I know how to run an organization — enough to keep things going until new leadership is on board," he said.

Nakano-Matsumoto joined CHAC in July 2015 after serving for 10 years as executive director of West Valley Community Services. She was selected to lead CHAC following the retirement

of Monique Kane, who served as the executive director of CHAC for decades.

The *Voice* was not immediately able to reach Nakano-Matsumoto for comment.

CHAC is a Mountain View-based nonprofit organization that provides counseling and mental health services for children, teens and families, including affordable care for psychiatric services using a sliding pay scale. CHAC has more than 80 interns, mostly psychology graduates and marriage and family therapists, who provide counseling for students in 33 schools in the area.

Nakano-Matsumoto told the



VOICE FILE PHOTO

Naomi Nakano-Matsumoto resigned as executive director of CHAC last week, after eight months heading the mental health agency.

► See **CHAC**, page 18

GOOGLE

► Continued from page 1

for the company and the city alike.

"Leave it to Google, a company that has never built a building before, to build a building like none other," said Councilman Ken Rosenberg, who admitted to borrowing the line from a colleague.

For the one-of-a-kind design, it was also a one-of-a-kind meet-

ing. At points, city staff admitted they lacked good comparisons for the bubble-dome aesthetic of the building. A photovoltaic canopy doesn't exactly fall into any standard roof category, pointed out city planner Stephanie Williams.

The proposed 595,000-square-foot building would go on a vacant 18-acre North Bayshore site at 2000 N. Shoreline Blvd. known as Charleston East that the city has leased to Google through 2064. Once built, it

would reportedly house up to 2,700 Google employees, plus an unspecified number of food-service workers, contractors and other ancillary people.

Many people visiting the new campus likely won't be working at all. A design highlight will be the "Green Loop" walkway going straight through the center of the building, which Google officials say will be a promenade of shops and cafes open to the public.

"We've prioritized innovation, community, nature and creating a place where Google can open its doors to the public," said Michelle Kaufmann, an architect working for Google. "We're creating a place that's welcoming and re-imagining the concept of a workplace."

Among the impressive features Kaufmann called attention to was the building's wavy white canopy, which was tailored to look "like a cloud." Along with filling the interior with soft light, the cover would serve as the largest office solar array in existence, generating 5 megawatts of power, well more than the building needed to operate, she said. The new campus would also be equipped with systems for capturing and reusing rainwater for its plumbing.

Despite the emphasis on environmental sustainability, some public speakers pointed out there would be sacrifices implicit in the grand design. Bird advocates warned that the new building's transparent sides and its cloud-like canopy could be a danger for migratory birds that might fly into it. In addition, the east side of the project slightly intrudes onto the habitat buffer zone for the protected burrowing owl.

Several others spoke in defense of the site's 229 heritage trees, which include many redwoods. Google's plans call for removing 159 of the trees, some of which were noted to be in declining health.

"That's a lot of redwood trees to fall down," said Mike Ferreira, chairman of the Loma Prieta chapter of the Sierra Club, who otherwise said he was "in awe" of the project.

Google representatives explained they were planning to plant about 260 new trees on the property, and they were working on a "tree phasing plan" that would examine which ones had to be removed. City officials urged the company to remove trees near the burrowing owl habitat, which would be a draw for predators, and to focus on preserving trees along the Shoreline Boulevard corridor.

For council members, the biggest sticking point of Google's campus design centered on parking — or more accurately, the near-total lack of it. Google's project includes only about a dozen parking stalls for handicapped drivers, far short of the 1,200 parking spaces required under city guidelines for this project. The company's solution is to use an adjacent parking lot for Shoreline Amphitheatre, a property owned by the city and leased to Live Nation.

'We're creating a place that's welcoming and re-imagining the concept of a workplace.'

MICHELLE KAUFMANN,
AN ARCHITECT WORKING
FOR GOOGLE

This would be only a temporary arrangement, as Google officials said they would eventually build enough parking capacity as part of a similar campus planned for its Landings property. That project, a 515,000-square-foot

office development at Charleston Road and Landings Drive, would begin as soon as construction in underway for the Charleston East property, said John Igoe, Google's real estate director.

"Landings would be completed so there's no impact with the lease the city has with Live Nation," he said. "The reason we're starting here (at Charleston East) is we're paying rent on this site!"

It remains unclear how this proposed deal is regarded by Live Nation, which has a lease for Shoreline Amphitheatre through 2025. Google currently sub-leases a portion of the amphitheater's parking lots for its bus parking. Representatives from the event company didn't speak at the city meeting.

Prior to the public meeting, the City Council met in closed session for negotiations on the price and terms of payment for the Shoreline Amphitheatre site. No report of any decision was made following the discussion.

At the study session, city officials indicated they were amenable to the temporary arrangement so long as Google agreed to provide compensation.

"The taxpayers of Mountain View don't anticipate letting a corporation like Google get free parking for 1,200 cars for up to five years," said Councilman Mike Kasperzak. "We need to talk with Google about compensation for that."

Nevertheless, council members also requested language in any deal to include incentives to ensure Google included parking in its Landings property. The risk, said Councilman John McAlister, is the city could be stuck with a building with no parking if Google suddenly decided not to go forward with the Landings project.

Once approved, construction for the Charleston East campus is expected to take two years. ▣



Paulson Park Senior Apartments is now accepting applications for its affordable unit waitlist.

*Preference will be given for persons who live or work in Mountain View

The submittal deadline is April 29, 2016 at 1:00 p.m.

Applications are available online at www.midpen-housing.org or at the leasing office.

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SCHOOL LUNCHES

► Continued from page 5

has been a relatively unpopular money-loser in past years. Breakfast participation, including students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals, dropped to below 20 percent across the district in the 2013-14 school year. The slump in sales has landed the department anywhere from \$68,000 to \$144,000 in the red each year. After dropping a contract with the food services provider Sodexo in 2014, district officials decided it was time to turn things around.

Debbie Austin, the district's new child nutrition director, said it was the right decision to ditch Sodexo. Standing inside the Crittenden kitchen, Austin offered her view on what the district ought to be feeding children: locally sourced fresh foods that are in season, with no exceptions. It may sound like a hard-line policy, but Austin said it's what parents want to see — and ultimately what drives up student interest.

"The kids love the food," she said. "Student participation has gone up, and it's going to continue to go up."

Austin has been serving up food in just about every capacity imaginable. She ran a restaurant in Oakland until the 1989 earthquake destroyed the building, then worked for food services at two Bay Area county jail systems. She most recently worked at the child nutrition departments in the Burlingame School District and the Alameda Unified School District before joining Mountain View Whisman just three weeks ago.

The move towards higher-quality food in school, Austin said, is really just a return to a bygone era. In the 1960s, when she was growing up and in public schools, she said, they saw the same kind of locally sourced and fresh food that schools are now scrambling to bring in. Since then, school districts have

increased the use of prepackaged and pre-prepared food that is reheated and served to students regardless of quality.

Around the time the Mountain View Whisman district decided to shift gears on food, the district hired Bob Mencimer — known affectionately by the students as Chef Bob — to help run a kitchen with an eye for culinary improvements. Like Austin, Mencimer has a background working in restaurants, and is known by his colleagues in the food services department for having a mean chili recipe.

"We've been working on the recipe for a long time, trying to get the right amount of each ingredient," Mencimer said.

There are a couple of key differences moving into school food from restaurants. Strict guidelines can limit the amount of salt added to dishes, and regulations require school districts to provide plenty of whole wheat products in the dishes they serve to students. Many of the meals also must be produced in massive quantities, as the district provides roughly 3,000 meals a day to students. Still, that doesn't stop Mencimer from getting creative.

Mencimer and the six or so kitchen staffers work from 6 a.m. to about 3 p.m. cooking, assembling and baking meals from scratch. On a late Tuesday morning, two cooks were busy chopping vegetables to put in chicken Caesar lavash wraps, one at a time, for the next day's lunch. Mencimer, across the kitchen, got started cutting up and cooking a massive piece of beef — bottom round — for roast beef.

Being a head chef, Mencimer has less of a direct presence with students compared to teachers or counselors. But students have

really warmed up to Chef Bob since he joined the district. His face can be seen on a laminated sign in the cafeteria with phrases above his head like "eat your vegetables," and students have a good idea of who is in the back of the kitchen cooking up their next meal.

Students also have no problem dropping suggestions on how to improve recipes. "We had a whole contingency of kids coming in saying, 'This needs more ginger!'" Mencimer said.

If something isn't cooked on campus and comes from a local company, Mencimer said, it has to go through the strict

chef scrutiny in order to make sure students aren't getting poor-quality food. Pizzas are put together by an outside company, Mencimer said, but the sauce has to have the right specifications

and the cheese has to be good enough to pass muster.

Most of the equipment in the kitchen is brand new. The district's last director of child nutrition, Juan Cordon, made an appeal to district staff and the school board last year making clear that it's going to take a serious investment in better kitchen hardware if the district has an interest in improving food for the students — many of whom come from a low-income backgrounds and rely on their school for consistent meals.

Purchases made since last June total \$310,000, including tilting skillets, salad bars, slicers, tilting kettles, and three high-tech ovens.

A move towards healthier food

The food services department has made a concerted effort over the last year to introduce students to more healthful, locally

grown food they may not have ever seen before, including an array of vegetables. In recent months, the district has tapped into its own reserves: student-grown vegetables from several Mountain View campuses.

The district, working with the nonprofit group Living Classroom, has more than 20 planter beds, full of fruits and vegetables, spread out among all its schools. Mencimer and the rest of the kitchen staff have been working hard to take the school's own vegetable yield and turn it into tasty meals, with a goal of getting kids to try something new.

At a recent event at Crittenden, for example, kids got to try out kale chips and kale salad. Other schools have harvested turnips, beets, Swiss chard and broccoli, and upcoming meals will include bok choy, spinach, and sugar snap peas. The vegetables produced in the school gardens are offered at each school on a rotating basis.

The district is also getting some outside help. The Silicon Valley Leadership Group recently announced that it will be buying salad bars for all of the elementary schools in Mountain View this year. The group hosted several fundraising events to pay for them, and has donated a salad bar to each school that needed one, according to Nancy Sanchez, a spokeswoman for the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

"We've pretty much saturated the market," Sanchez said. "All of the schools that have asked for a salad bar have gotten one."

As a longtime chef in local schools in the area, Mencimer said he welcomes the shift towards more healthful food made from scratch. The days of cheap, prepackaged pizzas with questionable cheese are over, he said, and that's great for the kids and great for him as well.

"As a chef you like the change. That's what keeps it interesting," Mencimer said. "It's not opening a cardboard box and saying, 'here you go kids!'"

RAMIREZ

► Continued from page 5

tion or just-cause (eviction rules) are going to solve the problem, but they would provide short-term relief."

Along with housing affordability, Ramirez said he plans to make improved transit, bike and pedestrian routes and enhancing civic engagement the main issues of his campaign.

Ramirez said his entrance into politics came around the time of the 2008 presidential election. The U.S. House and Senate suddenly took on new relevance, and he began watching individual races with new interest.

After graduating from Santa Clara University, he began volunteering for local politicians, including state Sen. Jerry Hill.

His interest in city politics was also ignited. He said he joined the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning and began learning about the local issues facing the city and shaping his own political ideas.

He later also joined Mountain View's Human Relations Commission and the Valley Transportation Authority's Citizens Advisory Committee, along with an extensive list of other groups. He also has a day job, a jack-of-all-trades position with a digital sheet-music distributor.

Has he ever had to skip a meeting? "I've been going to these for a long time — I may have missed one or two," he said.

More information about Ramirez's campaign can be found at ramirezforcouncil.com. ▣

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HACKER DOJO

► Continued from page 1

honorary title, she said.

As she thumbed through the records, a pattern of suspicious expenses emerged. The nonprofit's credit card appeared to have been used to pay for Las Vegas trips, hotels and gym memberships, among other things. The board agreed to perform an audit and on March 1, one day after the board gained full access to the nonprofit's bank accounts, Marie Knox, Hacker Dojo's longtime office coordinator, came forward and admitted to misusing the credit card for personal use, Banerjee told the *Voice*.

Knox, who was promptly suspended, reportedly said the charges were unintentional mistakes, and she pledged to reimburse Hacker Dojo. The exact amount allegedly stolen remains unclear, and board members say that so far they have examined only the last two years of credit card statements.

Knox did not return calls from the *Voice* seeking comment on the allegations.

At worst, the total amount stolen could be \$30,000, said Ghufan Syed, who was appointed as the new board treasurer about two weeks ago, in an online message-board post to Hacker Dojo members. But he noted that some portion of that sum was likely justifiable business expenses, so he expected the total amount to shrink. It's hard to say, since the board is still trying to track down older financial records.

Nevertheless, the scale of the potential theft is astounding — it could comprise Hacker Dojo's second-largest expense after rent. After a visit to the bank, the board members were assured that Hacker Dojo's main savings — about \$300,000 — was secure and still available as a down payment for a future move.

A few days later, Banerjee sent out a group email describing the theft to Hacker Dojo's full membership, effectively opening up the Dojo to the question: how could one staff member do something like this for years without being caught?

Banerjee said she finds it hard to believe this theft was an isolated case. So far, she says Hacker Dojo staff has been able to locate only a fraction of the receipts and cashier's checks written over the last years. She has also come to believe that the nonprofit's bookkeeping is untrustworthy, saying it often includes inexact approximations or in some cases what she believes could be outright falsified numbers.

"There's no way this can be an unintentional case if there's a pattern of abuse and accounts have been fudged," Banerjee said.

When the *Voice* asked for comment, the Hacker Dojo board of directors this week acknowledged the theft in a prepared statement. It noted the board is still working on a plan for Knox to provide restitution for the stolen funds and that, so far, the board has held off on filing criminal charges against Knox. In the same message, Hacker Dojo directors noted that since the discovery, one long-serving board member and the former treasurer had resigned, and two new directors have been appointed to replace them.

Dojo seeks new home

The revelations are coming at a bad time for Hacker Dojo, just two months before its current lease for its building at 599 Fairchild Drive will expire. Since last year, Hacker Dojo leaders have been looking to secure a new home, which is expected to be an expensive endeavor.

Hacker Dojo's board and staff did not respond to *Voice*'s request for a status update on the imminent move, leaving it unclear where the nonprofit plans to resettle.

But sources say Hacker Dojo's problems have been mounting for just about as long as the search for a new home. Brian Klug, one of Hacker Dojo's founding members, says 2015 was a particularly troublesome year, with several incidents requiring police calls, including what he said were sexual and physical assaults on the premises. Asked about this, Mountain View Police officials said they could find records for only three incidents in 2015: an auto burglary, a missing person, and an unspecified service call. Nevertheless, Klug said security was a major problem at the time. Open 24 hours, seven days a week, pretty much anyone could walk in the Dojo's doors, and the skeleton crew of staff members often weren't around to stop those causing problems, he said.

"This building had become the wild west of Silicon Valley with a lot of weird characters and management not doing anything," he said.

An open-door policy and loose rules bordering on anarchy is part of the appeal of hacker spaces like Hacker Dojo. Rich Bodo, a Hacker Dojo member who took a recent driving tour of similar facilities, said about a dozen hacker spaces exist in the South Bay, even though they sometimes are little more than a garage with Wi-Fi. Large hackerspaces, like Hacker Dojo or Noisebridge in San Francisco, tend to have a perpetual challenge with managing finances as well as the strong personalities who flock to them, he said.

"It's like a community center for high-functioning oddball

people," he said. "You have Internet access, coffee and water, and you get some people who are homeless and half-crazy, but you've got to love them."

In 2015, executive director Brian Rouch eventually stepped in and began imposing stricter rules. About a dozen members were banned, including Klug, which he attributes to a dispute with one of the staff members.

Many members say the culture at Hacker Dojo began to change, and Rouch began running the place more like a for-profit company. Wi-Fi access, the Dojo's lifeblood, became available only for paying members. Meanwhile membership fees, the Dojo's main revenue source, went up sharply — the regular package jumped from \$100 to \$195 a month.

Rouch already stood out at the casual hackerspace as the "Wall Street-looking" guy dressed in a formal suit and dress shirt, Banerjee said. After his changes to Hacker Dojo, he soon found himself hurting for supporters. Members put forward a petition to the board demanding that Rouch be removed. At that point, "the writing was on the wall" and Rouch resigned late last year, Bodo said. The executive director position was given to Jun Wong. With the departure of Rouch and Knox earlier this month, Wong is now Hacker Dojo's only remaining staff member.

As these transitions were happening late last year, Klug, still banned, was firing off a string of warning letters to Hacker Dojo leaders. He pointed out that management had evidently neglected to file basic paperwork, including its tax records, and as a result Hacker Dojo had lost its nonprofit status. After about six months with no action, Klug said he told the board that they could now be liable for about \$20,000 in property taxes.

Seizing the opportunity, Klug told the *Voice* he drove out to Sacramento and registered a new company called "Hacker Dojo" since no active business entity existed with that name. That meant even though the Mountain View's Hacker Dojo had the building, membership and piles of gear, Klug's newly created Hacker Dojo was technically the only one recognized as a legally sanctioned company. He said he decided to use this as leverage, giving back the Hacker Dojo name only if the board members agreed to some changes.

His biggest demand was for the board of directors to hold its first-ever election among the membership to fill an open board seat. It was held in January and Banerjee emerged as the winner with about six times more votes than any other candidate, Klug said.

Bad blood on the board

A little more than a month after Banerjee joined the board, Hacker Dojo's already tense leadership situation became more toxic after evidence emerged of the credit card misuse. Early on, Banerjee said everyone at Hacker Dojo lauded her efforts, but the disposition of others on the board soon became "vicious" toward her, especially as she asserted her belief that there could be larger problems.

She said Hacker Dojo staff blocked her from sending out invitations for a town hall meeting with the members to discuss the problems. Closed-door board meetings often turned into shouting matches, and she recalls one instance when Syed, the current treasurer, snatched the nonprofit's bank records out of her hands.

"A board member said, 'You've dug us into a fine hole on this,'" she told the *Voice*. "I feel either the board members don't understand what's happening, or they don't care."

Banerjee said resentment toward her deepened after she aired her complaints publicly on the Dojo's message board. About two weeks ago, she alleged the board wasn't following its legal duty to make its meeting minutes available and needed to improve its transparency. In response, another board member accused her of angling to be hired as the new executive director.

The tension among Hacker Dojo members was on full display at a town hall meeting on Friday, March 25. About two dozen members packed a meeting room to discuss a slate of new rules they were demanding be added to the Dojo's bylaws. These demands included that all board members be elected by the members and that expenditures be publicized within seven days. Multiple members made clear they felt an adversarial relationship (one member said they were "at war") with the board. One speaker threatened to abandon his membership if the board didn't sign off on the new bylaws.

To hear Banerjee describe it, the last month has been a wall of stress each day. As one of a small number of women who frequent the Dojo, it always been difficult working in a male-dominated culture at Hacker Dojo, she said. But in the last week, she said she's felt extremely isolated as she began to wonder about the integrity of her colleagues.

Earlier this month, the board secretary notified the rest of the directors that they would be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement. Banerjee refused. Around this time, another board member began questioning her mental fitness to serve on the

board, she said.

In the last few days, Banerjee told the *Voice* that she's concerned about the veracity of the Dojo's membership rolls and network security, as well as her own safety. Scrolling through her email while the phone with the *Voice*, she was startled to see her email messages start disappearing one by one, and said she feared that someone had hacked into her account. Earlier this week, she noticed about 20 attempts someone had made to send out a mass message through her email to all the members, but luckily it got blocked. Needless to say, it all felt scary, she said.

Bodo, a longtime Hacker Dojo member, said it was entirely possible Banerjee's email was hacked — for those hanging out at a hacker space, it's a safe assumption others are testing your computer's vulnerabilities.

"At a hacker space, when you walk in, you've got to assume people are trying to crack (your computer). They can't help it," he said. "If you're at Hacker Dojo and you're not using encryption, your email probably isn't that secure."

On Tuesday, Banerjee sent an email out to all the members announcing that she was resigning from the board. She was weary of the pressure from all sides on whether she should file police charges or stay silent. She said she stuck around, thinking her vote could make a difference, but it was starting to feel pointless.

"I now find that the culture of our Board no longer allows a decent, ethical and well-meaning professional to serve," she wrote.

For many members, the recent organizational chaos begs the question of what kind of future Hacker Dojo will have. When it moved from its original South Whisman Road location in 2012, the nonprofit heavily relied on its base of members and volunteers to transition into a new space. Some members interviewed for this story expressed concern that the support in the Hacker Dojo community might not be there this time around.

"People are up in arms and they've lost their patience," said one member, who declined to be named. "If we can't move, then maybe we have to start over and pick up the pieces. Maybe that's the best outcome."

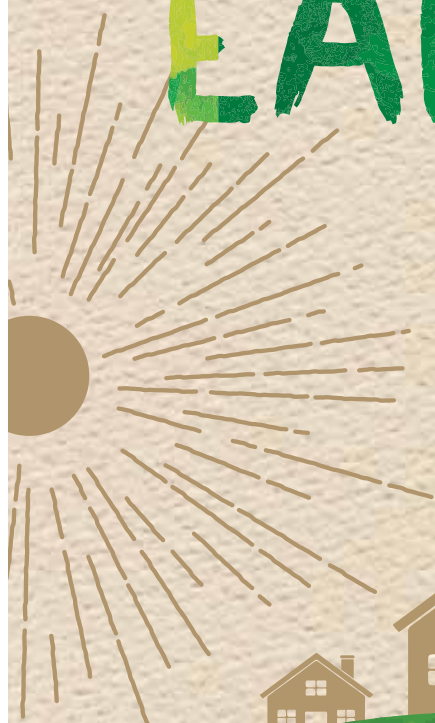
Bodo isn't worried; the community would just regroup to a new meeting space if Hacker Dojo died, he said.

"If Hacker Dojo disappeared, two days from now, we'd be meeting somewhere else on a regular basis, and six months from now we'd be in a new space," he said. "The people who are (at Hacker Dojo) get things done; they're badass — but they just don't want to manage things." ■

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PARENTS

▶ Continued from page 5

weeks, the 67 parents have been meeting up at the school at 6 p.m. After hosting a dinner paid for out of their own pockets, the parents begin the class at 6:30 while their children go to a child care program. Manny Velasco, Graham's School Linked Services Coordinator, said it's been extraordinary seeing the kind of commitment parents are willing to show by attending classes week after week, despite all the barriers.

"A lot of these families work two or three jobs and don't speak English," Velasco said. "Many of them didn't go through the school system at all in their home countries."

Among the lessons taught in the class, Velasco said parents learn how to engage teachers and what kinds of questions they should be asking, where to go for translation services, and where they can seek out resources on campus. Velasco said they learn about how to set up a home environment that is conducive to studying, including better nutritional and sleeping habits.

PIQE has a regional presence and runs out of dozens of schools throughout the South Bay. But it's been particularly popular at Graham, through both word of mouth and a concerted demand for the program.

"All the parents are happy about it," Velasco said. "Just the fact that they keep coming to a



MICHELLE LE

Olivia Ruiz checks on baby Christina during the March 29 graduation ceremony for a program to help non-English speakers get involved in their children's educations at Graham Middle School.

multi-week program like this is crazy, because a lot of them make the commitment even though they have a million other things on their plate."

Among the parents who graduated Tuesday night, 34 of them had perfect attendance. Some of the parents who have already graduated the program have continued to show up consistently at meetings to support the newer parents. One of those parents, Adriana Diaz, told the *Voice* after the ceremony that Latino parent involvement has improved drastically in recent years — due in part to the popularity of the PIQE program. She said the Eng-

lish Language Advisory Council meetings she attended while her child was in sixth grade were sparsely attended, and one of the parents suggested kicking off a PIQE program at Graham. The results, she said, have been shocking.

"We were really surprised with how much the program changed our lives," Diaz said. "The school is totally different now. Parent involvement is much higher."

The expansion of the PIQE program into Graham Middle School started about three years ago, due to persistent demand by one of the parents in the community, according to Janine

Ramirez, executive director of the San Jose regional office for PIQE. After sparking enough interest among school administrators, the program has since graduated over 200 parents from the program.

Ramirez said the program plays an important role in letting parents know that they need to work with schools and see them as partners in educating their children rather than expecting the school system to take care of everything. She said many families who come from outside the country are used to the idea that you don't question teachers or school staff and that they don't

have a place in the school.

"That is their reality, until someone comes in and says, 'You have a place, you have a right and you have an obligation to get involved,'" Ramirez said.

The Mountain View Whisman School District was recently dinged in a district-wide audit by the firm Cambridge Education for having poor translation services, creating a "barrier" for families who are not fluent in English. The district was also criticized for inadequate outreach to families on what English-language development classes are intended to teach, and what path students can take to become re-classified as fluent in English so they may rejoin regular classes.

Ramirez said the district is hardly alone — many schools in the area struggle to accommodate families who don't speak English or come from a very different cultural background. Teachers and administrators often times already have their hands full, she said, and it's up to programs like PIQE to fill that gap. And if Graham's high parent enrollment in the program is any indication, there's certainly a desire to get involved.

"Parents are making the effort, not just for one week but for several months, to support their kids," Ramirez said. "When they aren't active in the school system, it's not because they don't care. It's because of what they don't know." ■

Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com

HOMEWORK

▶ Continued from page 1

is not to exceed a weekday's worth of allowable time.

Because it's hard to determine how long students will need to finish assignments, the draft policy gives teachers wiggle room. The time range refers to how long it should take a "majority" of the students to complete assignments throughout the week. Anyone struggling to complete assignments in that time frame is urged to "speak with their teacher for help examining their study habits and strategies."

The policies, which are expected to be finalized and approved this spring, mark a big step for the district. Superintendent Jeff Harding said the district has historically not had any administrative regulations on homework. Part of putting the framework together, he said, was conducting a survey, still in progress, to figure out what students, parents and teachers want to see in a new homework policy.

"Everyone's got an opinion, so the last six months we've been sorting through data-gathering

from students and parents and staff," Harding said. "We are now paring it down to what will be the final version, but we're not there yet."

The primary driver behind a new homework policy has been student mental health. Teen stress and anxiety continue to be a big concern for board members in the district's highly competitive academic environment. One of the most recent measures of student health and well-being was the 2013-14 California Healthy Kids Survey, which found that between 14 and 17 percent of students reported they had seriously considered suicide in the last year, and more than a quarter of student respondents said they were dealing with chronic sadness and hopelessness.

In terms of student stress, 14 percent of Los Altos High School juniors, and 11 percent at Mountain View High School, reported that they missed class in the last 30 days because they felt hopeless, stressed, anxious or angry.

Teachers have been heavily involved in the process for months. Michelle Bissonnette, president of the District Teach-

ers' Association, said teachers generally support the proposed changes in the homework policy and have been part of a "highly inclusive process."

"Teachers have been instrumental in developing the new policies and providing feedback as the policy has continued to take shape," Bissonnette said in an email. "Our collective goal is that these policies will help promote student wellness and more effective teaching and learning."

It's going to take school administrators a long time to compile all the student feedback on the proposed homework policy — thousands of students submitted surveys on the draft policy this month — but there are already some signs that students are fans. Mountain View High School Principal Dave Grissom said most students are already convinced that conditions will improve at school once the homework policy is approved.

"It's been really positive," Grissom said. "About 60 percent of the students said it would be a little or a lot better for them with the new policy."

Some sticking points still must be addressed. The policy does not deal with times when big deadlines across multiple classes coincide, making it hard for students to keep up with all their coursework. Rather than leave it up to the teachers to coordinate with other another, the draft policy promotes "student self-advocacy" as the solution, encouraging students to let their teachers know when concurrent deadlines are going to be a big problem. Grissom said it's a problem that school administrators are still trying to work out.

"There are times when students are faced with several deadlines in the same day," Grissom said. "We've been working on that, and it's been a stumbling block for us."

One of the requests made by an overwhelming number of students at Mountain View High, Grissom said, is the need for a "tutorial" period in the day — something like a 35-minute period where students can seek out teachers on campus and get a little extra help and support on assignments. He said lunch and other designated break times

during the day are already a de facto tutorial period, and it would be a good idea to look at rolling it into the daily schedule.

"Way too many students are spending their lunch and break times in the classroom trying to catch up on things. We really should commit some time to it," he said.

Parents also got a chance to review the draft homework policy last week at a meeting on the Mountain View High campus. Sara Jenez, the school's PTSA president, said parents at the meeting generally felt the proposed policies are on the right track to manage student stress and work loads. She said there's still a concern among parents that there's not enough accountability built into the current policy, which puts the onus on students to complain if a teacher piles on too much homework.

"The question arises: will students be willing and able to self-advocate if the homework takes longer than expected or the teacher doesn't abide by the policy?" Jenez said. ■

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By Gennady Sheyner and
Mark Noack

From the coastal communities of Santa Cruz and Half Moon Bay to the sprawling campuses of Google, Facebook and Hewlett-Packard Co., the 24th District in the California Assembly is a place of scenic beauty and high-tech might, of affluent suburbs and blue-collar enclaves, of startup dreams and traffic nightmares.

Nature lovers and innovators have been flocking to this pocket of California for well over a century, since before Horace Greeley offered his famous dictum, “Go west, young man,” to anyone who’d listen.

The district also has its share of problems: insufficient housing, aging infrastructure, gaping income inequality and an uneven public education system. Located between San Francisco and San Jose, the district embodies some of the iconic of the features of both cities: an educated populace, a startup mentality and gentrification that, in many communities, creates barriers for newcomers and heartbreak for long-timers who cannot keep up with rising rents. There are also “quality of life” problems, like excessive airplane noise and insufficient parking, perpetual conflicts between developers and environmentalists and a mass-transit system that everyone agrees is overdue for a major investment.

The eight candidates vying to replace Assemblyman Rich Gordon in Sacramento all believe they have the solutions to the problems of both the district and California at large. They come from backgrounds as varied as the communities that make up the district. Gordon, who has been representing the district since 2010, will reach his term limit at the end of the year.

The ballot will include five sitting council members: Marc Berman from Palo Alto; Mike Kasperzak and John Inks from Mountain View; Peter Ohtaki from Menlo Park; and Barry Chang from Cupertino. Two other candidates — Seelam Reddy and Jay Cabrera — are each running dark-horse campaigns on shoe-string budgets (something each has done in the past). Vicki Veenker, a patent attorney, is the only candidate who has neither sought nor held an elected office in the past. She has, however, helped to co-found a women’s soccer league and, in her current run, earned endorsements

from both the California Nurses Association and the California Teachers Association.

The eight candidates will square off in June 7 primary battle, with the two top vote-getters advancing to the Nov. 8 election ballot.

Over a series of interviews in recent weeks, each of the eight candidates has offered a distinct vision for the district and explained his or her views about the hot topics of the day: high-speed rail, legalization of marijuana, affordable housing, transportation, water tunnels and the broader threat of climate change.

Over the coming weeks, the *Voice* will profile each candidate along with a rundown on where he or she stands on these issues and more. Here, in the first installment, are our introductions to assembly candidates Marc Berman, Jay Cabrera, Barry Chang and John Inks.

Marc Berman

PALO ALTO CITY COUNCILMAN

Marc Berman’s Democratic evolution may be traced to the time when, as a 7-year-old, he took part in a private tour of the White House and spent the whole time talking about how much he hated then-Vice President George H. W. Bush — a fury that Berman attributes at least in part to an abscessed tooth.

Or to his internship as an undergraduate student at Georgetown University in U.S. Anna Eshoo’s office. Or to his work the following year on Mike Honda’s first Congressional campaign. Or to the time he left Palo Alto with two suitcases and moved to South Dakota to help Tim Johnson defeat John Thune in the nail-biting 2002 Senate election.

A nephew of former two-term U.S. Sen. Rudy Boschwitz (who, along with his wife, Ellen, organized the aforementioned White House tour and who later had to write a letter of apology), Berman grew up steeped in politics — though it didn’t take long for him to realize that he and his Republican uncle weren’t on the same side.

“To a lot of people, when they’re growing up, politics is what other people do. The family doesn’t talk about it a lot. It’s not

tangible. For me, growing up, it was,” he said.

Berman, 35, began dipping his toes into political waters as a teenager, becoming student body president at Palo Alto High School. He enrolled at Emory University and, after his freshman year, spent time in Eshoo’s office in Washington, D.C., answering phones and assisting constituents. He transferred to Georgetown University and the following summer assisted with Honda’s victorious campaign. The next year, he took a summer stint as voting analyst in the Civil Rights Division at the Justice Department, reviewing applications for changes to polling places from states that are subject to the Civil Rights Voting Act.

Berman’s first foray into national politics came in 2002, when he moved to South Dakota to work on the Johnson campaign. And while Johnson’s razor-thin victory over Thune was rewarding, the thrill didn’t last. In 2004, Thune made national headlines when he defeated Senate leader Tom Daschle, on whose behalf Berman was working.

“Campaigns are great when you win; they’re a kick in the gut when you lose,” Berman said.

Chastened by the defeat, Berman enrolled at the University of Southern California law school and then went on to practice corporate law at two firms and began thinking about his own political career.

His first opportunity came in 2010, when he decided to jump into the Assembly race to succeed Ira Ruskin. Ultimately, Berman withdrew from the race and endorsed Josh Becker, one of three candidates vying for the seat (along with eventual winner Rich Gordon and former Palo Alto Mayor Yoriko Kishimoto).

Shortly after the election, Berman said he met with Gordon, who advised him to get involved locally. Berman took the advice to heart and, over the next few years, served on a citizen oversight committee for a Santa Clara Valley Water District tax measure and on a blue-ribbon committee in Palo Alto that surveyed the city’s infrastructure needs. He also joined the board of the Peninsula Democratic Coalition; became the founding advisory board member of the Silicon Valley chapter of the New Leaders Council; and helped relaunch Peninsula Young Democrats.

In 2012, Berman won a seat on the Palo Alto City Council. At a time when the council has been split between slow-growth “resi-

dentialists” and members more accepting of new development, Berman has typically voted with the latter. His voting record has been, for the most part, moderate. And on a council that at times favors lengthy speeches, granular micro-management and philosophical divisions, Berman is generally concise and invariably respectful.

There have been a few exceptions. In 2013, Berman gave a lengthy monologue accompanied by a video to demonstrate why he believed a proposed housing development on Maybell Avenue should be approved (many residents disagreed and voted to overturn the project later that year).

Later that year, he was one of only two council members to oppose a ban on vehicle dwelling, a decision that he said “started with my gut and then it became a position.” The council ultimately overturned the ban.

More recently, Berman has become more involved in housing and education issues. He had recently spent a year as development director at the Silicon Valley Education, resigning last fall to focus on his council duties and the Assembly race. At a recent candidates forum, he made a case that California has dramatically underfunded its schools and colleges and also advocated for the state to build more housing and reinvest in infrastructure.

He has also strengthened his party connections, raised \$226,476 for this campaign (second only to Barry Chang) and secured endorsements from Gordon, Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, former state Controller Steve Westly and Assembly Speaker pro Tempore Kevin Mullin, among others. Now, he hopes to channel their support, along with his experience, to win the seat and do his part to “level the playing field” in Silicon Valley. “The side that carries the day for me is the side that believes that a lot of people get born into pretty rough situations in life due to no fault of their own,” Berman said in a recent interview. “And that government can play an equalizing factor to make sure they get an opportunity to succeed, even notwithstanding the difficult situation they were born into.”

—GS

Jay Cabrera

COMMUNITY ACTIVIST

Jay Cabrera wants you to know that he is a “Bernie” candidate.

Sure, the California Secretary of State recently rejected Cabrera’s bid to include “Bernie” (quotation marks included) as part of his name on the June bal-

lot. But while the nickname was scratched, the rhetoric remains. In a recent interview, Cabrera said he is a “firm believer in understanding that the economy is being rigged” and that “campaign finance is being rigged to benefit the richest of the rich.”

Much like the senator from Vermont, Cabrera touts the fact that his campaign is based on small contributions and grassroots support — a

similar approach that he took in his prior six unsuccessful political campaigns (he was on the ballot for three of them: the Santa Cruz City Council in 2008; a Congressional bid in 2012; and Palo Alto’s school board race in 2014). He had also campaigned for the 24th District in 2010, though as a write-in candidate he did not appear on the ballot.

He recognizes that his current campaign is against “quite a steep hill, given the amount of money and organization that some of the big-money candidates have.” But, as Cabrera said during a recent interview, “Winning is not the most important thing.”

“The integrity of the system is more important,” Cabrera said. “And being true to myself and making sure we are actually representing the people.”

One of his major goals is to create a “21st century democracy” through which residents have more say in decisions. This means promoting direct democracy by giving people the technological tools to constantly communicate with government representatives and vote on issues as they arise. It also means encouraging more participatory democracy — the sort where residents actually attend government meetings. Cabrera’s goal, he said, is to find the right balance between the existing system of representative democracy and the other two types, which are more in line with his grassroots leanings. This means more debates and more interaction between the people and their elected leaders.

Cabrera, 36, said he believes California has enough resources to solve its top problems when it comes to education, housing and transportation. What’s missing is political will. Inadequate campaign-finance laws, he said, have created a system in which “you have rich individuals putting big money into the election process and getting their special-interest representatives voted into the Legislature and into Congress.”

► See **CANDIDATES**, page 16



Jay Cabrera



Marc Berman

CANDIDATES

► Continued from page 15

If elected, he would work to reverse the trend and increase taxes on the wealthiest residents. He is fully behind Bernie Sanders' proposal to tax derivative- and fast-money transactions. The money could then be used to fix transportation and make college education "free and guaranteed."

The theme of getting the richest to contribute more toward general welfare extends to other issues as well. Take the state's housing crisis, for example.

"I don't think affordable housing is a complicated issue. It's just a priority issue," Cabrera said. "We just need to force organizations, when they're building, (to devote) a certain percent ... for the community and the public."

He also believes the money is there to address the city's transportation challenges. He said his priority is a modernized Caltrain system, but he also supports the state's proposed high-speed rail line (though he also said he understands the public's frustration with the way the project has rolled out).

"High-speed rail is a normal thing to have in an industrialized first-world country, and we are the richest state in the richest country in the world," Cabrera said.

Cabrera is particularly passionate when it comes to sustainability. He is well-versed in the intricacies of Gov. Jerry Brown's proposal to build two tunnels to carry water from Sacramento to more populous regions in the southern part of the state. He currently opposes the plan because he believes it doesn't do enough to protect and enhance the environment. He challenges the assertion that building massive tunnels and taking water away from the Sacramento River is good for the river.

"I think it's very important to separate what humans need (from) what the environment needs," Cabrera said. "We need separate plans and separate goals."

On the broader issue of sustainability, he believes society should treat the "human economy" as a subsidiary of the "natural economy." He believes in "rights of nature," a legal system in which any person can represent nature in court.

He also wants to make sure that in California's production of goods, all objects are reused, recycled and environmentally sustainable.

"We'd outlaw landfills, and designers and engineers would have to design projects to be infinitely reused," he said.

Cabrera has plenty of other

ambitions: Break up big banks. End Super PACs. Increase the minimum wage. Most of his goals are aligned with those of Sanders, a candidate whom he began to follow in 2015.

It's too early to predict how many votes Cabrera will get in the June primary, but whatever happens, Cabrera is unlikely to end his democratic crusade any time soon. And while his campaign is based in the 24th Assembly district, his top priorities go well beyond the district's — or, for that matter, the state's — boundaries.

"I'm collaborating and working with the movement to support building a grassroots, bottom-up participatory democracy modeled to change and transform our political system in the United States," Cabrera said. "If our government is truly going to represent the people, we need normal people running and winning."

—GS

Barry Chang CUPERTINO MAYOR

In his campaign materials, Cupertino Mayor Barry Chang's top goals include environmental protection, job growth and boosting education. But to hear him talk, his passions are clearly most riled up by transportation, particularly the non-stop congestion that clogs Silicon Valley's roads on a daily basis.

Perhaps more than any candidate, Chang, 64, is making the area's transit woes his campaign centerpiece, and he doesn't shy away from pointing fingers and blaming county transportation officials.

"The North County and West Valley's transportation problems are being ignored, and that's what's causing these problems," he said.

"The money is supposed to be spent evenly and where the gridlock is congested most, but it hasn't gone that way."

It is an "embarrassment," Chang said, that the South Bay lacks a speedy transit alternative. Transportation officials would point to efforts to extend Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority light rail and BART, but Chang blasts the current priorities as misguided. It makes little sense, he said, to bring BART to San Jose instead of the Peninsula or to begin constructing the California high-speed rail system through the rural Central Valley rather than the urban coastal cities.

Chang wants to portray him-

self as the candidate who will go to the mat for the greater good. Traffic is awful and getting worse; tech companies need to contribute more; polluting industries need to be held accountable — and Chang says he's the best man to solve those woes. He points to his experience haggling with Apple Inc. over the company's extensive new headquarters as proof that he can work as a shrewd negotiator. In recent weeks, he unveiled a plan to charge a new employee-headcount tax as evidence he believes tech companies need to do more.

"We're getting into a situation where if you don't solve the traffic situation and the housing crisis you're going to have an impact on the economic growth here," he said. "That's why I'm running."

Chang can rightly claim some know-how when it comes to transportation. Trained in Taiwan as a combat engineer, he worked on a variety of infrastructure projects including the country's first freeway. He later immigrated to the U.S. to complete a master's degree in civil engineering, which eventually brought him to the Bay Area to work on designing nuclear power plants. He later decided to switch careers and go into real-estate sales.

He is married and has two daughters and a son. He and his wife together own and operate a home-and-loan brokerage company in Cupertino.

Chang's entrance into politics came through the local schools. He was active in parent groups and later successfully ran for a seat on the Cupertino Union School District board in 1995. After eight years on the school board, he decided to enter city politics, first as a volunteer safety commissioner. He was elected to the Cupertino City Council in 2009 and will be termed out from running again in 2018. He made an unsuccessful run for the District 24 Assembly seat in 2014.

Chang's current attempt at gaining state office recently was handed a setback when the state's Fair Political Practices Commission announced he had failed to follow disclosure rules on his 2014 contributors. Chang's campaign failed to provide full information on 160 donors, and they fined his campaign \$3,500.

Asked about this, Chang said the problem stemmed from his volunteer treasurer, who was under intense stress after losing his job and had to quit abruptly. The campaign struggled to replace him, Chang said, and this ultimately caused some political filings to lack information, such as donors' occupations and employer information.

Chang said he takes responsibility for the slip-up, and he is adamant that it won't happen again.

"It's my fault. I'm the candidate, and I should have looked into it more carefully," he said. "I'm sorry it happened this way, but it won't happen again."

As of February, Chang's campaign had accumulated a sizable war chest, totaling about \$328,000.

—MN

John Inks

MOUNTAIN VIEW COUNCILMAN

How does a Libertarian get elected to political office in Silicon Valley? That's the big question for John Inks, one of eight candidates vying this June for an Assembly seat, and he admits the search is still on for a solid answer.

The Mountain View City Council member said he is confident that a growing number of voters favor the principles of small government and personal freedom, but he said he isn't clear on how to translate those values into votes. Part of his inspiration to run, he said, is so that people have a candidate with those priorities as a choice.

"I want people to know there's someone like me who cares about property rights and will be an advocate for taxpayers," Inks said. "Individual liberty and freedom: Those are the kinds of things that if we don't exercise it, we lose it."

Not infrequently, those ideals have left Inks as the lone voice of opposition on some crucial decisions during his tenure on the Mountain View council. He opposed raising Mountain View's minimum wage, imposing a cap on carbon emissions and raising development fees to fund affordable housing. He readily admits in some cases the political winds of the South Bay are going one way, and he's headed in a complete different direction.

"I use my Libertarian tiller; it keeps me straight and it makes it easy to make tough decisions," he said. "In my tenure on the council, I've tried to be an advocate for freedom and liberty, but (local politics) have gone the exact opposite way."

Inks said he is encouraged by recent discussions over issues like rent control in which a large contingent of people voiced support for private property rights. If elected to state government, Inks said he would support the legal-



John Inks

ization of recreational marijuana, lower taxes and efforts to create market-driven solutions for state challenges, such as handing over roads maintenance to private contractors.

Even though he acknowledged he would have fundamental disagreements with many stakeholders, Inks said he can be an able communicator willing to talk with the experts to create policy.

Now 66 years old, Inks has lived in Mountain View ever since moving out for his first job with Lockheed Martin, and he worked for more than 40 years as an engineer. It was during his early years in the area that Inks began forming his political views. When a Republican colleague accused him of being a Libertarian, there was no going back, he said.

His entrance into local civics came gradually, starting with pouring ciders at the local holiday tree lighting ceremony and transitioning to volunteering for other candidates' campaigns. He later joined the city's Parks and Recreation Commission. After retiring from his job in 2005, Inks decided to make a run for city politics. He lost his first bid for Mountain View City Council in 2006, but he won two years later.

With his term limits kicking in later this year, Inks said his supporters encouraged him to run for the Assembly. The 66-year-old is upfront that if he doesn't win, he can find plenty of other ways to spend his retirement years.

"I enjoy leisure; I like travel; I love ballroom dancing," he said. "There's plenty of things to keep me busy." ■

—MN

Next: profiles of candidates Mike Kasperzak, Peter Ohtaki, Seelam Reddy and Vicki Veenker
Staff Writers Gennady Sheyner of the Palo Alto Weekly and Mark Noack of the Mountain View Voice can be emailed at gsheyner@paweb.com and mnoack@mv-voice.com.

Cities in Assembly District 24

Atherton, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Mountain View, Woodside, Portola Valley, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Sunnyvale, a part of Cupertino and the San Mateo County coastside — from El Granada to the Santa Cruz County border



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MVHS robotics team shoots to the top

SPARTAN ROBOTICS WINS REGIONAL COMPETITION, PREPS FOR GRAND FINALS

By Kevin Forestieri

Mountain View High School's robotics team kicked off the year on a high note, breaking records over the weekend and winning a regional competition in Davis, taking first place out of 60 teams across Northern California.

The 40-student Spartan Robotics team has been working tirelessly for months designing, engineering and tweaking a robot to compete in this year's FIRST Robotics Competition, a global event where teens put their tinkering skills to the test with a robot that can maneuver through a complex playing field and score points. And just like in past years, Mountain View's team continues to beat out the competition.

This year's competition has a medieval theme that seems to be attracting a whole lot more interest from spectators. Robots are tasked with breaching defenses, some of which are designed to look like draw bridges, moats and ramparts. After students are able to navigate their robots through these defenses, they must launch 10-inch foam balls into a castle-like towers to rack up points.

The competition lends itself to all sorts of roles, as robots can be designed to play defense against the oncoming assault, or can be built to go on the offensive, according to team captain Comran Morshed.

Mountain View's robot this

year is Geoffrey, a robot with an extendable arm capable of picking up and launching foam balls quickly and accurately through an auto-aiming system. Despite butting up against the 120-pound weight limit, Geoffrey can be pretty nimble, bumping and careening over obstacles without too much trouble. The robot is designed to overcome 8 out of the 10 obstacles on the playing field, Morshed said.

During the build season, students in the robotics club work tirelessly outside of school hours building and practicing with the robot, finding ways to improve the design. The team recently upgraded the robot's ball intake, turning the process of picking up the foam ball and placing it into the shooting arm a fast, split-second maneuver.

This year the team had a new piece of technology helping them out as well. A computer-controlled machine that can precisely cut metal parts for the robot, called a CNC router, now sits inside the classroom where students build and assemble robots in the back of the campus. Wyn Schuh, an advisor for the team, said students have kept the machine busy cutting parts to build and upgrade the robot, and was an essential part of re-designing the ball intake.

All the hard work seems to be paying off. The team's solid performance at the Sacramento Regional over the weekend allowed them to take the top seeding position, allowing them to pick teammates that would ultimately help to

win the competition. Through navigating tough terrain and firing off accurate shots at the opponent's tower, Spartan Robotics was able to break a record for highest number of points scored in a single match.

Despite having the shooting potential of an NBA all-star, team member Natalia Frumkin said consistency matters more than fancy plays. Mishaps are common at competitions — robots can get caught on something and get stuck for the rest of the match, or essential parts of the robot's design can break down. Back in 2014, Spartan Robotics came close to winning the grand finals in St. Louis, Missouri, but one of the robots on their alliance broke down and sat dead in the field because of a loose battery connection.

While it may seem like work is winding down for Spartan Robotics, there's still plenty to do. The team is trying to find ways that the heavy robot — more than 100 pounds of metal and electronics — might be able to scale the tower at the end of the match for additional points. At the same time, the team's robot design is now open for everyone to



COURTESY SPARTAN ROBOTICS

Geoffrey is Spartan Robotics' latest creation, and broke records to place first in a regional competition.

see, and no doubt other teams are trying to find ways to stop Geoffrey from turning into a point-grabbing juggernaut in the next competition, Morshed said.

"Nobody knew about our design until (last) Tuesday, and now they're strategizing against us," he said.

The next competition is the

Silicon Valley Regional, which team members say is a much harder event than the one in Davis. The event will be hosted at the San Jose State University Event Center from April 6 through April 9. More information on the event is available at www.firstsv.org.

Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com

CHAC

► Continued from page 6

Voice in November that leading CHAC involves lots of planning and resource allocation to make sure the organization doesn't get stretched too thin serving so many schools in Mountain View, Sunnyvale and Los Altos.

Bergan said clients should see no change in the quality of service at CHAC, as the organization

will continue to run smoothly through the transition process.

"Most of our staff has been there for decades. They know what to do, they know how to do it," Bergan said. "We're financially healthy, everything is going well, it's just a change in leadership."

Email Kevin Forestieri at kforestieri@mv-voice.com

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

CALTRAIN SCHEDULE CHANGES

Caltrain will be updating its train schedule on Monday amid growing numbers of riders who are bogging down stops at several stations along the rail corridor.

Ridership on Caltrain increased to more than 60,000 average weekday riders, forcing Caltrain to operate at or beyond 100 percent capacity during peak hours, according to a Caltrain press release. The rising demand has recently caused trains to stop for longer periods at stations as a growing number of passengers get on-board.

The weekly timetable will be adjusted by several minutes per train to better reflect actual departure times at each station, according to the press release. The new timetable will take effect starting April 4, and can be viewed online at caltrain.com/newtimetable.

The increase in ridership has been particularly tough for bicyclists, who are not allowed onto heavily-crowded train cars because of lack of space. Concurrent with the timetable changes, Caltrain will be adding a third bike car to its Bombardier trains to increase on-board bike capacity from 48 to 72 bikes.

In 2014, Caltrain added 16 used rail cars to the system in order to meet growing demand, and are currently considering requests to add an additional bullet train service.

Anyone seeking more information on the new Caltrain schedule may call 1-800-660-4287.

—Kevin Forestieri

SIDEWALK OFFICE HOURS

Community members can chat with Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian about local issues during Simitian's "sidewalk office hours" in Mountain View, Sunnyvale and Saratoga beginning April 2.

"I look forward to talking to people one-on-one," Simitian said in an announcement for the event. "Sidewalk office hours give both the public and me a chance to interact in an informal, friendly atmosphere. It's tremendously helpful to hear first-hand what folks have on their minds."

No appointment is needed. Simitian will host sidewalk office hours at the following locations:

■ Sunnyvale Farmers' Market, Murphy Avenue in Sunnyvale. Saturday, April 2, 9-10:30 a.m.

■ Saratoga Farmers' Market, West Valley College. Saturday, April 2, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

■ Mountain View Farmers' Market, Mountain View Caltrain Station. Sunday, April 3, 10-11:30 a.m.

■ Saratoga Farmers' Market, West Valley College. Saturday, April 16, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

—Palo Alto Weekly staff

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Mark Noack (223-6536)

Photographer

Michelle Le (223-6530)

Contributors

Dale Bentson, Trevor Felch,
Mimm Patterson, Ruth Schecter

DESIGN & PRODUCTION

Marketing and Creative Director

Shannon Corey (223-6560)

Design and Production Manager

Kristin Brown (223-6562)

Designers

Linda Atilano, Diane Haas,
Rosanna Leung, Paul Llewellyn,
Nick Schweich, Doug Young

ADVERTISING

Vice President Sales and Marketing

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Published every Friday at
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(650) 964-6300 fax (650) 964-0294

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El Camino Hospital's clinic closure, expansion plans hurt district residents

By Joan Brodovsky

Guest Opinion

I have been a volunteer Spanish-English interpreter in the Rotacare clinic for nearly 10 years. I received the Dec. 21 email sent to all the Rotacare volunteers telling me that my services as a volunteer were no longer required because the clinic was closing.

On Dec. 30, I read a Mountain View Voice article that reported that several El Camino Hospital officials protested that no decision had been made about permanently closing the clinic.

On Jan 15, I read, again in the Voice, that the board of the El Camino Healthcare District (El Camino Hospital) had voted to buy 16 acres in South San Jose for a new facility. Hospital officials justified buying land there, outside the district, by saying that many of El Camino's patients are from San Jose. They further stated that a new facility was necessary to maintain the financial integrity of the hospital.

To support the plan, hospital official Ken King said, "The Los Gatos hospital has proved profitable so far ..."

I read the amended and restated bylaws of the El Camino Healthcare District. "The purpose of the District is to establish, maintain and operate ... health services ... for the benefit of the District and the people served by the District ..."

I read the El Camino Healthcare District mission and purpose, which, in part, is "(iii) to establish, maintain and operate, or provide assistance in the operation of, free clinics ..."

Since January, I have been back at Rotacare, translating in the consulting

rooms as patients are updated, given their charts, told about the MayView Community Health Center, and told they now would have to go there or find another clinic.

I want to tell the board of the El Camino Healthcare District that these two actions — closing the Rotacare free clinic and buying land 25 miles and often 100 minutes away — may be permitted, but they do not smell good.

They may fall within the guidelines of the health care district, but they do stretch them. The district facilities are meant to serve people who live within the district. People from outside the district may be served, but the district should not seek users from outside.

El Camino Healthcare District's mission includes maintaining and operating free clinics, or providing assistance to them. Yes, one could argue that financially supporting the MayView clinic would comply. But MayView is *not* a free clinic. It charges between \$20 and \$90. Payment is made in advance of service.

El Camino Healthcare District should establish and maintain health services for the benefit of the district and the people served by the district. Mountain View and Los Altos residents don't want to go to South San Jose for their health care.

El Camino Healthcare District is operating the hospital as if it were a profit center.

Why should I care? I care because the El Camino Healthcare District is severely reducing service to the most needy people in our community. Here is what Rotacare has had:

■ Weekday clinics, on many days through the evening.

■ Free primary care service.

■ Free vaccination.

■ Fifteen free specialty services.

Rotacare has served patients who work at restaurant, gardening, and day care jobs that offer no benefit, no vacation, and no insurance. Many of the patients work two jobs, just to pay the rent.

MayView has no specialist except a gynecologist who attends once a month.

MayView has had no dedicated translators for a clinic that, when I visited, was full of Latinos.

MayView is *not* free.

I read that El Camino is closing Rotacare, then I read that it isn't sure, and then I read that it is expanding to better its bottom line.

I see and hear Rotacare patients told to go to MayView, or wherever they want.

Then I hear from MayView that it is not a free clinic, that it has not had dedicated language interpreters, that it serves a large Latino population, and that it offers virtually no specialty service.

I see and hear, and I wrinkle my nose. It just stinks.

Joan Brodovsky has lived in Mountain View since 2008; she lived most of her life in Mexico City, where she worked as a consultant for the pharmaceutical and chemical industries. Now retired, she works occasionally as a medical editor and is active in Balanced Mountain View, a group that promotes increased housing to balance the enormous recent influx of jobs in Mountain View.

■ LETTERS

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

BICYCLIST'S THOUGHTS ON CLOSING CASTRO

I read the article in the Voice about potential plans to close the intersection of Castro/Central/Moffet. I appreciate the thought going into this, but I really hope you consider bike commuters and pedestrians who use this intersection to get from Moffet to Castro. A pedestrian bridge should not be out of the question. This should be done regardless.

I live on the Moffet side and work on Franklin Street. I ride my bike across those tracks every morning at 4:30 a.m., and it would be more dangerous if I had to be redirected to turn right on Central and go up to Shoreline.

That just doesn't make sense.

Another idea: If you have to close Castro, *please* open up a crossing at Bernardo and/or Calderon.

*Laura Schuster
Easy Street*

FIND MIDDLE GROUND ON RENT ISSUE

To landlords, their rental property is a business or way to make some extra income. To those needing a roof over their heads, their home is a basic human right.

Is there a middle ground so that the needs of both parties are met? Neither side will get exactly what they want, but that's compromise.

► Continued on next page



COVERING MEDIA

Fix 'hot spot' streets to reduce speeds, end roadway fatalities

By Thida Cornes

We have all read about the roadway fatalities. Before someone unfortunately dies, there are many indicators that a roadway or intersection is unsafe.

Recently one of my neighbors emailed a warning because she was almost killed crossing Shoreline Boulevard. She managed to run out of the way in time.

I wish this was an isolated incident, but I hear about near-misses all the time. Many folks will tell you in private that after a near-miss, they are scared to walk or bike in much of our town.

The most affected are our seniors. Most of the Mountain View roadway fatalities are seniors.

There were seven roadway fatalities over the past year and the number is rising. If the murder rate was seven a year, it would be unacceptable. People know that there are things we can do to reduce murders. The good news is we can also reduce roadway fatalities as well.

Most of the drivers who kill people are not drunk or texting, or even driving at excessive speeds. They are simply not paying attention and driving slightly over the speed limit. Unfortunately, this difference in speed can mean the difference between life and death.

A small increase in roadway traffic speeds results in a disproportionately large increase in pedestrian fatalities. If a pedestrian is hit at 30 mph, his or her odds of death are 45 percent. If hit at 40 mph, the odds of dying jump to 85 percent. Many of our roads allow drivers to go 40 mph without any thought. Many of our intersections do not cue the driver to come to a complete stop and are not designed to make pedestrians and bicyclists easy to see. This creates anxiety and risk for good drivers. I have seen drivers rear-ended because they stopped for pedestrians.

Shoreline Boulevard is one of several high-risk streets where people live and near-misses happen many times a year. Tragically, eventually someone can't get out of the way in time and is killed. This is unacceptable and preventable.

I appreciate that the City Council has created a two-year goal to work on bike and pedestrian infrastructure. However, the focus is on large projects, which take many years and are piecemeal. Staff, and particularly

Guest Opinion

police, have worked on making our streets safer, but making our streets safe for all ages requires a policy shift over time.

Vision Zero is a policy that all roadway fatalities are unacceptable because they are preventable. Vision Zero policies have been gaining momentum and have been adopted in large cities such as New York and San Francisco as well as smaller cities such as San Mateo and Fremont.

As part of a Vision Zero policy, high-risk locations such as Shoreline Boulevard and El Monte would be identified as "hot spots," and over time fixed to be Complete Streets — i.e., streets for everyone and equally accessible for all modes of transportation including driving, walking and biking.

Policies begin with values. I value human lives. I value children having the freedom to walk and bike to school. I drive myself, but I feel an expressway is where it's appropriate to drive 40 mph, not residential streets where people live.

Most residents share these values, yet our current infrastructure reflects values from the 1960s. The main metric of success is Level of Service: "traffic flows at or above the posted speed limit." It's not taken into account if driving at that speed is stressful or dangerous for drivers interacting with pedestrians or bicyclists, or even trains or emergency vehicles.

In the short term, the city would use paint and other low-cost methods to try to make high-risk roads safer. I appreciate police efforts to enforce areas where people request it, but we need consistent data collection so police can target their efforts on proactive information about hot spots, rather than reacting after someone has died.

It's time for Mountain View to live its values and adopt a Vision Zero policy that values our residents' safety, especially seniors and children. We need to have Vision Zero in Mountain View.

Thida Cornes serves on the Mountain View Parks and Recreation Commission and the Mountain View Whisman School District Facilities Committee. She co-founded the nonprofit Great Streets Mountain View.

► Continued from previous page

Not all landlords are money-grubbing bad people and not every tenant is a saint. A landlord has expenses and a right to make a reasonable return on his or her investment. A tenant desires a decent place to live with some predictability of his or her rent. While some landlords may have taken advantage of the tight housing market, I doubt that all landlords have raised rents to the levels we read about in the newspapers.

If a landlord has charged below market rate for years, does that landlord have a right to raise the rent, which may

seem exorbitant, but still well below the going rate? If the tenant is not able to afford to live in Mountain View, is it the landlord's responsibility to keep the rent low so that tenants are not forced to find more affordable housing, even if that means moving out of Mountain View?

No one is expecting that rents will decrease here unless there is an increase in the rental inventory or the economy has a major pullback, which is not likely to happen in the near future, but some would like the city to step in and set limits on rent increases.

Cities seem to do best when focusing on enforcement of regulations and local city services; they are not well-suited to deal with issues affecting the changing social fabric of our neighborhoods and regulating commerce. Instead of getting Mountain View to create rent control measures as a first step, I would rather see tenants and the city reach out to rental property owners to see if there is some common ground for agreement on rate increases.

Steve Fishman
Serena Court



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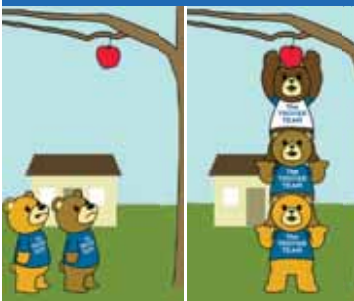
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