

Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY



Abigail Van Neely

Peninsula Clean Energy CEO Shawn Marshall outside of her office in January.

Peninsula Clean Energy's new CEO is committed to reducing carbon emissions and energy prices

By Abigail Van Neely

Throughout her career, Shawn Marshall says she has tried to make sure her work reflects her personal values. Now, as the new CEO of Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE) she hopes to continue centering people while providing more affordable energy options.

Marshall stepped into the position last July after previously serving as PCE's chief operating officer. She succeeds Jan Pepper, who led the agency since its inception in 2016.

As a nonprofit community choice aggregation agency, CAA, PCE procures electricity on behalf of its customers. It aims to put energy on the grid that is cleaner, greener, and more affordable. PCE is the official electricity provider for San Mateo County and the city of Los Banos.

Moving into her new role felt like a full circle moment for Marshall. "I understand this agency from the kernel of the idea all the way through: to its name, to its legal founding, to its core mission and strategic plan," she said.

As a '70s kid, Marshall's childhood dream was to become a singer, or maybe an actress. But, over time, she became more aware of the growing climate crisis. After college, Marshall got involved with local climate action organizations advocating for land conservation, open space, and clean air. In the late '90s, she spent six months traveling through Asia, Africa and the Middle East, an experience she said showed her firsthand the impact of climate change

See **CEO**, page 9

Menlo Park proposes revised aquatics fees, giving big discount to Belle Haven

By Neil Gonzales

Menlo Park has proposed revising aquatics fees that would give Belle Haven residents a deep discount to use the pool in the new neighborhood center underway there.

During its regular meeting Feb. 13, the City Council, in a 3-2 vote, moved to proceed with the proposal to revamp fees for various activities and services at the pool complex at Burgess Park and the one being built as part of the Belle Haven Community Campus (BHCC) under construction at 100 Terminal Ave. Vice Mayor Drew Combs and Councilmember Jen Wolosin dissented.

The council is expected Feb. 27 to consider final approval of the new fees, which would then become effective on April 1.

"The vast majority of resident fees do not increase with the new proposed fees," Sean Reinhart, the city's library and community services director, said during the meeting. "In fact, there is a very substantial reduction proposed in resident fees, specifically for residents who qualify for the hyperlocal rate."

The hyperlocal rate would be a reduced charge applying to those residing or going to school within the BHCC service area, which would extend from Bay Road to San Francisco Bay and encompass

all of council District 1 and portions of District 2 near the pedestrian and bicycle overcrossing of Highway 101 at Ringwood Avenue.

For the most part, according to a city staff report, those within this area would see fees lowered by up to 35%.

They would be charged, for instance, \$42 for monthly lap and open swim compared to the current \$65, according to the report. Other residents and non-residents would pay the same as they do now for that activity — \$65 and \$72, respectively.

The discount for those in the BHCC area "would result in overall lower revenues at Belle Haven Pool," Reinhart said, "but it's hoped that the increased usage of the facility will offset the revenue lost to some degree."

The idea behind the hyperlocal rate is to prioritize access and use of the new community center by those in that service area "in recognition of historic inequity and generational harm caused by redlining, freeway construction and property loss, and other discriminatory practices of the past that uniquely affected the neighborhoods in the vicinity of BHCC," the staff report said.

BHCC is targeted for a summer opening with the Belle Haven Pool expected to be ready later in the year.

See **AQUATICS FEES**, page 10

Menlo Park business updates: Le Boulanger closed, Ace Hardware expanding, new wine bar coming

By Fan Chen and Angela Swartz

Downtown Menlo Park continues to see businesses come and go.

Le Boulanger vacated its storefront at 720 Santa Cruz Ave. on Nov. 23, according to a sign posted on the business' front door. The space is being gutted to make way for a wine bar, Somm Cellars, according to the

alcohol license posted on the storefront's window.

"Thank you for your support and business over the years and we will miss all of our loyal customers," the note reads. "This is not a decision that we made lightly and we are sorry that we couldn't stick around longer. We hope to see you at one of our other locations and that this is not a goodbye!"

In 2020, the main offices of this family-owned chain moved to Fresno, after its headquarters property, brand and business were purchased.

Its locations in Los Altos, San Jose and Mountain View are still open, according to the business' website. Its San Mateo location closed in 2019 after 25 years in business, according to a note from the owners at the time.

Menlo Clock Works, the watch and clock repair shop permanently closed on Nov. 25, after four decades in operation.

"After 42 years of serving our wonderful community, we are sad to say goodbye," the website announcement reads.

According to this news organization's reporting, the owners plan to keep the shop building at 961 El Camino Real and lease it

to a restaurant.

Both owners did not respond to this news organization's requests for comments.

Openings, expansions

The Flegel's Design at 1010 El Camino Real, Suite 90, expected to close at the end of 2023 but did not shutter after all. Owner

See **BUSINESS UPDATES**, page 8

Police identify victims of San Mateo homicide

By Jennifer Yoshikoshi

San Mateo Police officers identified the victims of a homicide that occurred in a San Mateo home on the 4100 block of Alameda de las Pulgas on Feb. 12 at 9:13 a.m.

Through fingerprinting, the adults were identified as Anand Henry and Alice Benziger, along with their twin boy children, who were identified through familial identification, according to a Feb. 15 press release from the San Mateo Police Department.

The investigation has found that both Henry and Benziger were wounded by gunshots.

The release states the San Mateo Police Department, the County Coroner's Office and the County Crime Lab have identified Henry as the suspect.

The 9mm handgun, found on the bathroom floor where both bodies were located, was legally registered to Henry. Benziger suffered from multiple gunshot wounds, while police found Henry was shot once. The cause of death for the twin boys is pending pathology tests, but officials confirmed it was not caused by gunfire.

Prior police reports show that there was no history of violence at the home. The

family was found dead during a welfare check after the family was unable to be reached over the weekend. The police department estimates that the incident occurred sometime on Saturday afternoon, Feb. 10.

"Our investigation into the motive for this tragedy continues," said Jeanine Luna, SMPD's community relations officer, in the press release. "While we can't undo this horrific incident, we would like to share with our community both domestic violence and mental health resources, because there is help and/or assistance out there, and

something like this does not need to happen again."

SMPD has provided a list of local mental health and domestic violence resources:

- **Community Overcoming Relationship Abuse (CORA)** is an organization aimed at providing support, safety and healing to victims of domestic violence. Visit www.cora-support.org for more information and call their 24-hour hotline, 1 (800) 300-1080.

- **San Mateo County Health-Mental Health Services** provides 24/7 assistance through phone by calling 1 (800) 686-0101. Visit smchealth.org/mental-health-services

for more information on their resources.

- **StarVista** is an organization that offers counseling, case management, skill development and crisis prevention programs in San Mateo County. Their crisis hotline is open 24/7 at (650) 579-0350. For more information visit star-vista.org/programs/crisis-center/

- Community members can use the **988** suicide and crisis lifeline by calling or texting 988 for help. ■

Email Staff Writer

Jennifer Yoshikoshi at

jyoshikoshi@almanacnews.com.

AQUATICS FEES

continued from page 5

During the meeting, the council directed that the fee for subcontractor lane rental be reduced to \$15 from the staff-recommended \$18.

The direction came amid concerns that nonprofit groups subcontracting space in the city's aquatics program — long managed by private operator Team Sheep — are being charged too much.

Currently, the fee for subcontractor rental per hour a lane ranges from \$14 to \$18, according to the staff report.

But other pools elsewhere charge \$6 to \$8, public commenter John Martin told the council.

He complained that in Menlo Park community programs are paying the same level as commercial outfits.

"We just don't think that's fair or reasonable and respectful," he said. "So we don't think the operator should be increasing fees for any of the community programs. In fact, we think the operator should be bringing the fees back in line

with what other local pools are charging."

Combs acknowledged that sentiment during council deliberations. "I do think that there's legitimate concerns from established community nonprofits about these increases and the impacts and the disparate nature that is appearing there," Combs said. "I think that that's valid."

Tim Sheep, CEO of Team Sheep, told the council that the subcontractor fee has held steady at \$14. While other fees and operating costs have gone up, Sheep said, the lane charge for subcontractors has "remained the same for the past five to six years."

The city's aquatics fees are currently set at the discretion of Team Sheep, Reinhart said.

If ultimately adopted by the council, the revised fees would be incorporated into the city's master fee schedule.

That move would be consistent with the requirements in the new five-year contract that the council approved in September for Team Sheep to continue running the city's



Magali Gauthier

Swimmers work out at Burgess Pool in Menlo Park in 2023.

aquatics program, the staff report said.

That contract stipulates that

aquatics fees would be subject to council approval in the master schedule, the report said. ■

Email Contributing Writer

Neil Gonzales at

ngonzales92@yahoo.com.

Employment

Staff Engineer (Menlo Park, CA) – Bedrock Labs Inc: Design & implmnt agntlss, distribtd cloud srvc tht provds custmrs w/ insghts into how thr cloud resrcs ar being usd & mngd. REQS: Master's (or forgn equiv) in Comp Sci, Info Tech, or rltcd & 3 yrs exp. Alt, Bedrock will acctp Bach (or forgn equiv) in Comp Sci, Info Tech, or rltcd & 5 yrs exp in followng. Exp cn be gaind pre- or post- Master's: usng distribtd systs exp in key-valu stors to bld resilient sftwre srvc; usng opertng systs knwldg w/ exp in Unix to optmz MapReduce frmwrk fr lrge scal distribtd systs; usng MapReduce intrnls to bld infrstrctr fr strm/batch prcssng data; bldng effctnt data prcssng pipeln fr prcssng lrge amnts of data; & setting tech dirctn & effectvly leading team of enginrs & interns. Salary \$215,197-230k/yr. Email resume to pranava@bedrock.security & use ref code 431183.

Work from home as a Customer Service Agent for an olympic Steel Inc and earn more. Job requirements: Ability to communicate in English, Internet access Previous working experience is an added advantage. Interested applicants should forward their resume to Jeffrey Klein email (hr@olympicsteel.info) for more info.

For employment advertising, please visit AlmanacNews.com/employment_ads/.

OBITUARIES

Local residents who died recently include:

Mary Finlayson, 90, a Woodside resident who raised seven children and had a passion for music, learning how to play the piano, flute and harp and singing in the Chorus Pro Musica with the Boston Symphony and with the Oakland Symphony Chorus, and who in 1963 co-founded the Berkeley Montessori School (later called The Berkeley School), on Feb. 12, 2024.

Yolanda "Lolly" Font, 93, who earned a PhD from the California Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and was heavily involved in education, serving in her children's PTA and working as a preschool director for her husband's school in San Jose, Beacon School, and who also

worked as a yoga teacher at the California Yoga Center, on Feb. 3, 2024.

Samuel Anderson, 83, a longtime Palo Alto resident who attended Cubberley High School and later taught English at Mills High School in Millbrae, and who was a founding member of the Beyond War Foundation as part of his commitment to world peace, taking groups of U.S. high school students to the former Soviet Union during the historic time of glasnost and perestroika as part of the People to People Student Ambassador Program, on Dec. 24, 2023.

To read full obituaries, leave remembrances and post photos, go to Lasting Memories at AlmanacNews.com/obituaries. ■