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ELEPHANT SEAL TAKES BREAK ON BEACH

By MARY SCHLEY

A LARGE elephant seal suddenly scooted out of the water and snuggled into the sand at the south end of



PHOTOS/KERRY BELSER (ABOVE), JERRY CARTER (TOP)

A sleepy elephant seal pulled himself up on Carmel Beach Tuesday morning, startling a woman who left her chair and belongings behind as she got the heck out of the way. Two days earlier, storm-tossed waves and a high tide completely covered the beach.

Carmel Beach Tuesday morning, drawing onlookers and startling a woman enjoying the sunny morning, before eventually returning to the water and swimming south.

Spotting the beast in the water and watching him pick a spot on the beach was a new experience for resident Jerry Carter, who happened to be nearby that morning.

"I was on the south side of Carmel Bay and saw something in the water that I had never seen, with a head bigger than I'd ever seen," he said. "And someone said it was a walrus. He was just swimming back and forth across the south side, and then as I got down closer, he decided to get up on the beach, which I had never even seen a seal do before."

It wasn't a walrus, but an elephant seal, which is protected by law and has colonized beaches at Año Nuevo State Park and at Piedras Blancas in San Luis Obispo County, making them off-limits to people.

"It was probably 12 to 15 feet long — a

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Sunset wall, sinkhole slated for repair

CITY OFFICIALS are consulting with engineers regarding how best to shore up the wall on the east side of the north lot at Sunset Center that failed during this month's storms, and crews are set to repair the sinkhole in the Del Mar parking lot that developed after a pipe failed there, according to public works superintendent Stu Ross.

Monterey Peninsula Engineering received a \$12,000 contract to repair the culvert in the lot at the foot of Ocean Avenue, Carmel city administrator Doug Schmitz said this week, and Ross reported work will begin on Monday, since the contractor needs to obtain some special parts for the job. Originally, MPE had planned to get the repairs done this week,

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Asbestos, mold removal at Forest Theater

Theater groups worry about driveway, entrance for audience

By MARY SCHLEY

CARMEL CITY administrator Doug Schmitz signed a contract with M3 Environmental Consulting last week to test for asbestos and mold at the Forest Theater, which was closed in April due to health and safety hazards relating to plumbing, electrical and structural issues. For \$8,982, the contractor will test for the toxic substances in the concessions stand, restrooms, control booth and indoor theater, "so that any remedial work that might have to be undertaken can be done while the renovation work of Phase I is under way," he said.

Phase I includes basic repairs to the theater in order to get it open again, as soon as possible. According to Schmitz, construction drawings were submitted to the building official for review on Dec. 18. During the week of Jan. 5, 2015, the documents will be returned to the architect, Cody Anderson Wasney, for any corrections to the plans. Sometime around Jan. 20, Phase I will be put out to bid, with the council meeting a month later to award the contract.

Meanwhile, on Jan. 9, the city will hold a meeting with the groups that use the theater to review the preliminary concepts of Phase II, which will include the driveway and parking, according to Schmitz. On Jan. 15, the council is set to review the Phase II preliminary concepts, along with any

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Baker sues over being excluded from farmers market

By KELLY NIX

A STANISLAUS County baker and former vendor at the Carmel farmers market has filed suit against the City of Carmel over a city council decision six months ago to ban out-of-town businesses from selling their goods at the weekly market.

Gerit Sand, owner of Cobblestone Bakery in Riverbank, alleges Carmel-by-the-Sea breached a contract he had with the farmers market organizer when the council decided in July that only vendors in Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties could sell at the market.

In doing so, according to the lawsuit, the city discriminated against Sand and his Stanislaus County-based business in favor of their local businesses, and he lost money. He is asking for an unspecified amount in damages exceeding \$25,000.

Carmel "breached its contract with [Gerit and Cobblestone] by failing to permit them to operate their booths within the farmers market," according to the lawsuit filed Dec. 16 in Monterey County Superior Court.

Neither Carmel city attorney Don Freeman nor mayor Jason Burnett responded to messages seeking comment Wednesday.

Sand said he had a verbal agreement with the West Coast Farmers Market Association — the company that contracts with Carmel to operate the market — to sell there. He paid a \$50 fee to the market to rent a space each week, plus a \$741 one-time fee to the Monterey County Health Department for a health permit.

Though the council made sweeping changes to the farmers market in July, which included prohibiting crafts and changing its operating hours, it again revised its policy in September to allow vendors from outside the Monterey Bay area, but said preference should be given to vendors from Monterey, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties.

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30-mile trail network to link people with parks

By CHRIS COUNTS

AFTER WORKING behind the scenes, a group of four local residents have unveiled plans for an ambitious 30-mile network of recreational trails and greenbelts connecting Del

P.G. to allow homeless to sleep in their cars

By KELLY NIX

TRANSIENTS WILL be allowed to sleep in their cars overnight in Pacific Grove, the city council decided after months of considering the idea.

By a unanimous vote at the Dec. 17 meeting, the council approved an ordinance that would allow men and women without a proper roof over their heads to snooze in their cars, trucks and SUVs in designated areas, as long as they have a permit from the city.

The goal is to "to provide stability for vehicle dwellers and enable them to make positive changes in their lives to

Rey Oaks, Seaside and Marina with Fort Ord Dunes State Park, Fort Ord National Monument and Monterey County open space.

The four individuals — California State University Monterey Bay professors Fred Watson and Scott Waltz, Marina Planning Commissioner Margaret Davis and Marina City Councilwoman Gail Morton — envision creating a continuous 12-foot-wide paved bikeway encircling Marina and Seaside, offering easy recreational access to a 990-acre state park, a 14,658-acre national monument and 1,300 acres of county open space.

The trail network would utilize 7.5 miles of the Monterey Bay Recreation Trail. Another 22.5 miles of trail would need to be constructed, although much of it already exists as dirt paths or dirt roads. And the vast majority of the new trail would be routed through a 300-foot buffer of open space.

The intended beneficiaries of the trail are walkers, joggers, recreational and commuting cyclists, children in strollers and even people in wheelchairs. The corridor of open space would be wide enough to accommodate a separate path for hikers, mountain bikers, equestrians, and anyone else seeking a closer look at nature.

Not only would the trail be a boon to those who enjoy recreation and the outdoors, but it would also serve as an economic engine for the communities it borders, its supporters contend.

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