

The Carmel Pine Cone

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TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Perotti, Fenton rehired by city

■ Council also OKs settlements that include payouts to attorneys and union

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER BEING placed on administrative leave more than a year ago pending investigations into “gross misconduct” — namely, wrongly accessing computer files and emails, and even providing information to The Pine Cone — and then being fired at the end of March by former city administrator Jason Stilwell, Leslie Fenton and Margi Perotti were offered new jobs with the city this week.

During a special closed session Wednesday morning, council members (minus Victoria Beach, who was absent) approved “settlement agreement and release” documents for both women, who were longtime city employees before Stilwell fired them.

After their terminations on March 27, 2014, each woman “raised claims of wrongful termination and violation of due process of law, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, defamation, deprivation of her property interest, and breach of contract, among others,” according to the settlements, which were drafted “to resolve all matters related to her prior employment and termination.”

Neither Fenton nor Perotti will return to the planning department, where they were working under planning and building director Rob Mullane as administrative coordinators, and Perotti also in code enforcement. Now, Fenton will become city administrator Doug Schmitz’ executive assistant, and Perotti will be community activities assistant, the role held by Cindi Lopez until she retired last summer.

Fenton, who started working for the city’s fire department in 1995 and later moved to the planning department following reorganization driven by the recession in the early 2000s, is set to report to work Feb. 1. The executive-assistant position is non-union and at-will, and pays \$56,328 at the top level, which she’ll be receiving. Because Fenton is not represented by the union, the city agreed to give her 30 days’ notice and three months’ severance if she’s terminated from

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Lawsuits unmask battles in breakup of Bernahl-Weakley partnership

■ Allegations of fraud, conspiracy and ‘misappropriations to finance lavish lifestyles’

By KELLY NIX

ACCUSATIONS OF forgery, fraud, slander and theft are among the shocking revelations in a series of tangled lawsuits and counter-lawsuits filed in the last few weeks involving the founders of Coastal Luxury Management — the company behind Pebble Beach Food & Wine and several restaurants, including Restaurant 1833 in Monterey.

One lawsuit even accuses Coastal Luxury Management cofounder Rob Weakley of hatching a “criminal scheme” to defraud his former partner, David Bernahl, while a second accuses Bernahl of engaging in a “pattern and practice of corporate waste in the form of excessive travel and entertainment” for his personal benefit.

In the most recent complaint, filed Dec. 19, 2014, in Monterey County Superior Court, Weakley alleges that wine tycoon Charles Banks failed to pay him a \$250,000 balance on a \$450,000 purchase price for Weakley’s interest in CLM. Weakley departed the company in July. At the time, his departure was depicted as amicable, but legal documents reviewed by The Pine Cone make it clear Weakley was forced out.

While Banks gave Weakley an initial \$200,000, he hasn’t paid the balance, according to the suit, filed for Weakley by Monterey attorney Andrew H. Swartz.

‘A post-employment scheme’

In response to Weakley’s suit, Los Angeles attorney Scott Vick — who represents Banks, Bernahl and CLM — told The Pine Cone that his clients plan to pursue claims against Weakley to “expose his wrongful actions and meritless allegations.”

Vick also called Weakley “disgruntled” and said his lawsuit was an attempt to “distract attention from CLM’s allegations that Mr. Weakley embarked upon a post-employment campaign to actively defraud CLM and brazenly breach his agreements with CLM and Mr. Banks.”

But Swartz said Tuesday that “Mr. Vick’s allegations in the Los Angeles lawsuit are preposterous and false, and we look forward to a trial if necessary.”

And that’s just the beginning.

On Dec. 9, Bernahl filed a hotly worded lawsuit in Los Angeles County court against Jeff and Cindy Troesh, his and Weakley’s partners in a trendy L.A. restaurant called Faith & Flower. Though Weakley isn’t named as a defendant because

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Palo Corona parking may be off limits for two years

By CHRIS COUNTS

A CROWN jewel among Monterey Peninsula parks, 4,500-acre Palo Corona Regional Park could soon get the one thing that keeps it from being more than a well kept secret among local hikers — a parking lot.

As early as Jan. 14, the Monterey County Planning Commission could approve plans for the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District to build a 57-vehicle parking lot at Palo Corona park. If approved, the construction of the lot would be funded by taxpayers via a \$250,000 grant from the California Rivers Parkway Program. But once it’s built, it will probably be at least two years before it can be used.

To open the parking lot, a section of Highway 1 near the park’s entrance will need to be restriped and repaved. But that project will cost taxpayers about \$500,000, and its benefits would be short lived, because the same stretch of highway will need to be torn up as part of the Lower Carmel River Floodplain Protection and Enhancement Project, which

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PHOTO/JOE KOHEN/GETTY IMAGES

Happier days: Robert Weakley (left) and David Bernahl in August 2013 at the opening of the Los Angeles Food & Wine Festival. A year later, their partnership was over and the recriminations began.

month by someone named “Fredric Thomson.” The residence, in fact, belongs to an out-of-town owner named Gloria Bowie, who pays the San Carlos Agency to rent it out.

“As a homeowner, I am very upset that I should be abused in this way,” Bowie told The Pine Cone, adding that she has worked with the San Carlos Agency for a decade, and its agents do a wonderful job. “As for the unsuspecting public, I think this is unforgivable.”

The fake-rental scenario is not unusual, according to James Pfeiffer, general manager of the San Carlos Agency.

“It happens often enough,” he said, though the frequency seems to have increased over the past six months. Long-term vacation rentals, and even homes for sale, “have all shown up

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Internet offers rental bargains galore — not

By MARY SCHLEY

EVERY COUPLE of months, would-be renters stumble across an irresistible offer to move into a Carmel home. The house is well appointed, probably furnished, and the owners can’t live there, for whatever reason. And the rates are great: Say, \$500 a month for a three-bedroom house — in a town where a one-room studio can go for \$2,000 — and all a person has to do to land the bargain rental is submit an application and pay a deposit.

Of course, the application solicits all sorts of personal information, as well as money, before the prospective renter ever gets to see the inside of the house.

Such was the case with a three-bedroom home on Alta Avenue in Carmel that was posted for rent on Craigslist last

preferred contact method:
email only
reply by email:
fredric.thomson@yahoo.com
webmail links:
gmail
yahoo mail
hotmail, outlook, live mail
aol mail
copy and paste into your email:
fredric.thomson@yahoo.com

Excellent home! Three bedroom, two bath, 1087 sq ft house with two car garage. Nice kitchen that leads out to covered patio, washer/dryer included. Check it out! 3025 Alta Avenue. pets or smoking ok, landlord pays all utilities. \$500/month, \$500/deposit. Please go by the property to ensure the area/property is acceptable. To view the inside you will need to submit an application for review. An application is available for download from our Tenant Services page. You can also contact us to have one faxed or emailed. Our application process is stated on our website and application.

nt home! (Carmel, CA)

3BR / 2Ba | apartment | available now

This Craigslist ad shows a too-good-to-be-true deal: A three-bedroom home for rent in Carmel for the low, low price of \$500 per month. It’s just one example of many fraudulent listings designed to steal money and information.