

The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 101 No. 9

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

February 27 - March 5, 2015

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Baby sheep melt hearts at Mission Ranch, including Clint's

By CHRIS COUNTS

CLINT EASTWOOD might play a tough guy in the movies, but the recent arrival of 13 baby sheep at Mission Ranch brought out his sensitive side.

"He loves those lambs," Barbara Wigham of Mission Ranch said of the filmmaker and actor, who has owned the hotel and restaurant since 1986. "He comes to visit them every day."

In an effort to boost the size of the ranch's flock of Scottish blackface sheep, a ram was introduced last August to the herd's 20 ewes. Nature took its course, and over the last month, 15 lambs were born. All but two have survived.

One lamb in particular has melted just about everybody's heart, including Eastwood's.

"His twin died, and he was very lethargic for three or four days," recalled Wigham, who has added the title of sheep manager to her duties at Mission Ranch, where she works as the hotel's events director. "He was so weak, he couldn't stand and reach his mama. I didn't think he was going to live."

In an effort to save the lamb, Wigham intervened.

"One of the men who works here, Lamberto, and I learned how to milk the mother and feed the baby with a bottle. The first day we did it, the mother was very nervous and agitated — she had never given birth before. So Lamberto started singing Christmas carols to her in Spanish, and she calmed right down. It was really cool. I said, 'It's a miracle,' and Lamberto said, 'milagro.' So we named him Milagro."

Milagro has won the affection of Eastwood, who attended the Oscars in Hollywood this week with his girlfriend Christina Sandera, the former manager of the restaurant at Mission Ranch.

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PHOTO/COURTESY BARBARA WIGHAM, MISSION RANCH

An employee at Mission Ranch feeds Milagro, a lamb who recently joined the hotel's flock of sheep but was too small and weak to reach his mother.

Grand jury communications to remain secret

By MARY SCHLEY

WHILE A January letter from the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury to the City of Carmel demanding personnel files of several employees was made public, all other communications between officials and members of the civil grand jury investigating the town's operations and dealings under former city administrator Jason Stilwell will remain under wraps, according to an email from interim city clerk Lee Price Feb. 19.

"Pursuant to the penal code, the civil grand jury's work is confidential," Price wrote. "Each person called before the grand jury signs a pledge to keep his/her comments and any matters raised or documents sought by the panel confidential."

An outside attorney advised the city the California Public Records Act "does not override the penal code's confidentiality provisions," she said. "Thus, the city and its agents cannot release any materials pertaining to the civil grand jury or its investigation without potentially being subject to legal action initiated by the civil grand jury."

In January, civil grand jury foreman pro-tem Louis Panetta, chairman of the Carmel investigative committee, demanded information from the personnel files of the late Steve McInchak, Margi Perotti, Leslie Fenton, John Hanson, Art Black, Tim Meroney and Susan Paul. McInchak died of a heart attack while on paid leave, and Perotti and Fenton were terminated under Stilwell but have since been given back pay and rehired, as was Hanson. Black and Meroney left the city's employ years ago, though they had a contract to do

Citing state law and fearing 'being subject to legal action'

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Serial rapist to be released in Monterey County

By KELLY NIX

A SEXUALLY violent predator from Seaside who raped several women in the 1970s and 1980s has been cleared for release from a state hospital for sex offenders and could soon be a Monterey County resident again.



Eldridge Chaney in the 1980s

Eldridge Lindsey Chaney Jr. was convicted of rape and assault with intent to commit rape on several women including a military wife and a 16-year-old girl. Chaney, who's in his early 60s, spent about 20 years in prison before being transferred for treatment at state hospitals in Atascadero and Coalinga. But on Oct. 7, 2014, a Monterey County Superior Court judge — whose name was not released by a county spokesman — ordered Chaney's release from Coalinga State Hospital to begin "out-patient treatment" somewhere in Monterey County.

"We've been notified that the search for housing in

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Officials to discuss roundabout concerns

By KELLY NIX

GROWING CONCERNS over ambulance access to Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula and other issues once the Highway 68 roundabout is fully under construction, and even after it's open, will bring together city officials, project planners and others next week in hopes of resolving their differences over the project.

CHOMP officials last week said they're worried that once the roundabout is open in 2017, drivers who want to head eastbound on Highway 68 from nearby Carmel Hill Professional Center, which CHOMP owns, will be forced to make U-turns at the hospital intersection to return to

Highway 68, since left turns from the professional center will be prohibited.

And that, according to the hospital, could create a logjam at the entrance to CHOMP, and preventing ambulances, doctors and others from entering and exiting the hospital during emergencies.

That concern — and others, including longstanding worries about traffic through the area while the road is being torn up for the roundabout project — will likely be hashed out at a closed-door meeting hosted by 5th District Monterey County Supervisor Dave Potter on March 2. Representatives from Carmel, Pacific Grove, the Pebble Beach Co., California Highway Patrol and the project's backers, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County and the City of Monterey, will attend.

"The main genesis of the [meeting]," Potter told The Pine Cone Thursday, "is that there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of talk about traffic circulation. The meeting will be an opportunity for anybody who is going to be answering the phone during construction to find exactly how it's going to work."

The meeting is apparently needed because, even though the roundabout has been in the works for years, a lot of people seem to be just starting to think about it.

A TAMC official said this week that the agency was caught off guard by CHOMP's comments to The Pine Cone that it's concerned about emergency vehicle ingress and egress to the hospital, especially considering CHOMP agreed to the left turn prohibition at Carmel Hill Professional Center in 2006 as a condition to building its Forest and South pavilions.

"It would be an understatement to say that we were surprised by the comments made by the hospital," TAMC community outreach coordinator Theresa Wright told The Pine Cone this week.

Wright said improvements were already made to accommodate U-turning vehicles at the CHOMP intersection, including a second left-turn lane from CHOMP onto

Judge to rule whether water district fee will be on Nov. 3 ballot

By KELLY NIX

THE TAXPAYERS group that sued the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District nearly two years ago over a disputed "water supply charge" that's being added to everybody's monthly Cal Am bills asked a judge this week to put the issue on the November ballot so voters can decide on the fee.

The request was made during a trial Tuesday in which Monterey County Superior Court Judge Efen Iglesia heard arguments for and against the monthly surcharge, which makes up a good chunk of the water district's budget. The Monterey Peninsula Taxpayers Association, which filed suit over the fee, contends it's a tax that should be repealed.

The fee, imposed in October 2012, is calculated at

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