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Getting all tuned up



PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

The Carmel Bach Festival Orchestra, under Paul Goodwin's baton, rehearses Wednesday on the stage at Sunset Center for the opening night concert of its 78th season. The festival, "Bach and Beyond," runs from July 18 through Aug. 1 and features not only the works of J.S. Bach, but also Mozart's opera, "The Magic Flute," and pieces from Eastern European composers such as Bartok and Dvorak. We have a special section inside, and tickets and program information are available at www.bachfestival.org.

Council: Changes to Forest Theater renovation might trigger EIR

■ Opts for minor tweaks to avoid costly, lengthy process

By MARY SCHLEY

FIXING THE Forest Theater hasn't required an EIR, but on Wednesday night, the Carmel City Council learned that any significant changes to the already approved plans could trigger the need for scrutiny under the California Environmental Quality Act. As a result, council members decided to make the smallest possible revision to the troublesome issue of the theater's handicap-parking space.

"The project was initially processed with a CEQA exemption, predicated on the fact it was mainly a repair and maintenance project," planning director Rob Mullane told the council at the July 15 meeting. "The goal was to get the theater open with as minimum as possible modifications to the site."

The plans were approved with

no lawsuits filed, and work began last month. But Mullane warned that changing the design might require the city to undertake an environmental review that could take at least six months.

"Any changes would require CEQA analysis and might be challenged," he said.

As a result, council members unanimously voted to make the smallest possible change to the plans: to design the space for handicap parking so that the driveway and walkway in the approved plans can be eliminated. The spot would remain up near the back of the stage, but would be low enough to avoid having cars interfere with pedestrian traffic,

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Judge seeks answers about latest desal conflict of interest

By KELLY NIX

A JUDGE with the state's Public Utilities Commission this week ordered California American Water and a consultant the CPUC used to analyze the Cal Am desal project to explain a possible conflict of interest because the same consultant also worked for Cal Am.

On July 9, CPUC Administrative Law Judge Gary Weatherford announced that the agency was extending the deadline for the public comment period for the EIR on Cal Am's desal project, in part, because Dennis Williams, president of Geoscience Support Services — the hydrogeological firm hired to design the slant well used for Cal Am's test well in Marina and analyze data from the operation — also had a role in advising the CPUC on whether the test well was a good idea. Williams holds patents for slant well technology that Cal Am could purchase to build and operate the final desal plant, which exacerbates the conflict.

"Geoscience may have a conflict of interest in representing both Cal Am and serving as a subcontractor to

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POLICE STILL UNABLE TO HELP WITH LOBBY VAGRANTS

■ Meanwhile, more customers' tales of woe

By MARY SCHLEY

WITH AT least two transients frequently spending their nights in the post office, which remains unlocked at all hours so residents can get their mail, the local postmaster sent a letter to Mayor Jason Burnett May 15 asking the police department for help. But officers are still powerless to do anything about the vagrancy, since the post office is federal property and the postal service has yet to draft an agreement with the city for the enforcement, Police Chief Mike Calhoun said Thursday.

"I am requesting your assistance with the homeless individuals who continue to use the lobby at night," postmaster Sandra Tamiano said in the letter.

But, Calhoun said this week, "I need more than a letter. We're still trying to follow up. I need some kind of directive from the postal service's security division."

The city has been fielding complaints about homeless people

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PHOTO/COURTESY JESSE JUAREZ

Local postal officials have long tolerated transients sleeping in the Fifth Avenue post office, but now they want police to do something about them. This particular overnight resident was bedded down in May.

No matter how much the cats fight, there always seem to be plenty of kittens

By ELAINE HESSER

THE HEADLINE above is a quotation attributed to President Abraham Lincoln. While Honest Abe was speaking metaphorically about conflict, he was also telling a literal truth. Just head down Lighthouse Avenue in Pacific Grove and take a look inside the Animal Friends Rescue Project adoption center. It's teeming with mewing, frolicking fuzz balls.

According to Kelly Lehrian, AFRP's executive director, there are 150 kittens in foster care right now. And that's not even half the story. The SPCA for Monterey County also has lots of felines — 185, to be precise, mostly kittens, and most too young to be adopted.

The SPCA's spokeswoman, Beth Brookhouser, said, "We can always use more foster families." Lehrian agreed. Foster care can last a few days to a few weeks, said Brookhouser, depending on how old the kitten is.

Some kittens come in so young that their eyes aren't open yet. Sometimes whole litters come in with their

mothers. Lone kittens have to be bottle-fed, or in some cases, a cat that's already nursing can be a surrogate.

Last year, AFRP found homes for more than 620 cats and kittens. That's enough to fill most of Sunset Center's seats, assuming you could get them to sit still long enough. Where do they come from? Well, OK, we know where they come from, but why does the number remain relatively static from year to year?

After all, no responsible shelter or organization adopts out kittens and cats that haven't been spayed or neutered. AFRP even has a mobile clinic to take out into the community. There are groups that trap whole feral colonies and have them sterilized.

The main challenge to reducing the number of surrendered or homeless kittens, said Lehrian, is the speed at which felines reproduce. Their gestation period averages just 66 days. They can become pregnant as young as 4 months and can bear two or three litters annually. A litter



PHOTO/COURTESY AFRP

This little guy is just a few weeks old and is one of more than 300 kittens currently living in AFRP and SPCA shelters and foster homes

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