

The Carmel Pine Cone

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TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Kiosks gone, two-hour limit back on Ocean

By MARY SCHLEY

THE COMPANY that owns them removed the paid-parking kiosks along Ocean Avenue Monday and Tuesday, and then the city broke up the concrete pads they stood on and patched the holes in the sidewalks, bringing Carmel's paid-parking experiment to an end.

Soon after, the signs instructing motorists how to pay for parking were replaced with their former two-hour-limit signs, bringing the city's experiment with paid parking to an end.

The parking program that began in early December 2014 had motorists paying \$2 per hour, for stays of up to four hours, to park on Ocean Avenue between Junipero and Monte Verde streets. The idea was to discourage downtown business owners and their workers from taking up the valuable spaces that would better be used by customers.

While the program accomplished that and earned about \$120,000 for the city — and had support from some residents and business owners — others complained the kiosks were ugly, that charging for parking negatively affected their businesses, and that the whole program was counter to the character of Carmel. As a result, the city council decided early this month to remove the parking kiosks and figure out other ways to deal with congestion downtown, including requiring people to move their cars outside the commercial core after being parked for two hours, charging for longer stays, and increasing enforcement.

On Friday, city administrator Doug Schmitz reported some progress was being made on those fronts.

A new parking-enforcement scooter was ordered and should be delivered within the next two months, according to Schmitz, for an estimated \$41,000, including equipment.

In order to ensure the parking officers can use license-

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New garbage bills bring sticker shock

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER RANDY Bernett, owner of Katy's Place on Mission Street, opened his garbage bill at the post office Monday, he walked straight to Carmel City Hall to complain.

"I was so outraged," he said. "Because it was, in essence, a doubling of my former bill." The invoice was the first Bernett had received from the city's new waste hauler, GreenWaste Recovery, which took over garbage services from Waste Management Inc. July 1.

The switch was the result of a multiyear review and contract-negotiation process undertaken by several members of the Monterey Regional Waste Management District, and many Peninsula cities have replaced Waste Management with the new company in recent months. The city's contract with GreenWaste spans 15 years and will cost customers about \$30 million.

"The city had predicted a 10 percent to 12 percent increase, and it wasn't," Bernett said. In fact, his monthly bill — which he said covered emptying a dumpster six days a week for the restaurant and an upstairs apartment — rose

A restaurant gets hit with a \$620-a-month increase

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Post office gets police patrols

By MARY SCHLEY

THE CITY'S police officers can now enforce vagrancy and other laws in the Fifth Avenue post office, where postal workers have been encountering problems with transients sleeping in the lobby at night.

"We reached out to the inspector in charge in the San Francisco division and had him put together a request-for-assistance letter directed to us, which gives us the authority to go ahead and respond to situations like the vagrancy issue at the post office," Police Chief Mike Calhoun told The Pine Cone Wednesday. "We have a little more standing now."

The letter is the precursor to a more defined agreement between the U.S. Postal Service and the city authorizing the police to enforce the laws in the post office, which is federal property.

Police Cmdr. Paul Tomasi emailed Rafael Nunez, head of

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PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

They weren't spirited away in the middle of the night, but the parking kiosks on Ocean Avenue still disappeared quickly this week, as crews removed them Monday and Tuesday and patched the sidewalks where they stood.

LOCALS TAKE AIM AT STATE PARKS PROPOSALS

By CHRIS COUNTS

THE RESPONSE last week to a series of proposals that would make "improvements" to Carmel area state parks was swift and unmerciful, as residents lined up against projects that make easy targets — like zip lines — as well as projects that are much more important, such as parking lots and a campground.

Barbara and Bob Booker summed up the sentiments of many locals when they accused state park officials of trying to destroy their "dream" retirement in the Carmel Highlands.

"They think it [is] a progressive idea to turn a majority of the beauty of the area just south of Rio Road from a land of native deer and equally dear surroundings into what can no better be called a theme park," they told The Pine Cone.

The proposals — which include establishing one parking lot in the former agricultural field west of Highway 1 and another on the former Point Lobos Ranch — were unveiled

at a well attended meeting July 22. They are part of a lengthy process to develop general plans for four state parks properties: Carmel River State Beach, Point Lobos State Reserve, Point Lobos Ranch and Hatton Canyon.

The process is particularly critical for the Point Lobos Ranch, which can't open until a general plan for it has been developed. Taxpayers shelled out \$13 million for the 1,300-acre property nine years ago.

State parks official Mat Fuzie conceded that most of the proposals discussed at the meeting have drawn fire from residents. Instead, they prefer that the parks be kept just the way they are. "Most of our feedback is they don't want anything," Fuzie said.

Fuzie, though, said he wasn't surprised by the comments. He said the general plan process requires his agency to look at every reasonable alternative. "It would be irresponsible for

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Commission makes no changes to theater plan

By MARY SCHLEY

DESPITE RECOMMENDATIONS from the council that last-minute changes be made to the renovation plans for Forest Theater, the planning commission decided Wednesday to leave them pretty much the way they are.

In particular, after learning that keeping the existing driveway at the Forest Theater and reorienting the sole handicap-parking spot — an idea proposed by the city council at a July 15 meeting — would require the removal of a few large pines and the construction of several switchbacks of ramp to meet federal accessibility laws, the commission unanimously voted Wednesday to recommend the council go with the design it approved several months ago.

The only change planning commissioners liked would be to add some fill dirt to soften the retaining

walls the driveway and parking spot will require, as recommended by the architect.

The planning commission held the July 29 meeting at the request of the city council, which earlier this month discussed ways to avoid the excavation, fill and retaining walls necessary to build a legal driveway and ADA-compliant parking spot at the theater. The facility was shut down in April 2014 due to health and safety hazards.

"The council wanted to look at a reconfiguration that they thought would have less of an impact," planning director Rob Mullane explained.

But the council didn't have detailed drawings or the opportunity to discuss the idea directly with theater architect Chris Wasney, whose firm, Cody Anderson Wasney, was hired by the city about a year

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PHOTO/KERRY BELSER

Planning commissioners and others donned hardhats for their tour of the Forest Theater, which they decided should be renovated as planned.