



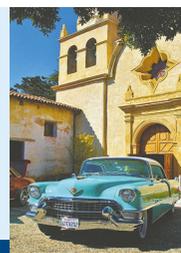
CONCOURS WEEK

AUGUST 7 - 13, 2015



So many gorgeous cars ... so many events ... this week on the Monterey Peninsula!

Read all about them in our colorful special section!



The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 101 No. 32

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

August 7-13, 2015

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Council weighs emergency ban on beach fires

By MARY SCHLEY

WITH THE mayor saying he wouldn't want to live on Scenic Road because the smoke from beach fires could be harmful to his young son, and a councilman threatening to resign if his fellow council members didn't take action to immediately ban or limit beach fires, the issue of fires on Carmel Beach rose to a fever pitch this week, and the council convened Thursday night to consider banning them altogether — at least temporarily.

"I will not take responsibility for further environmental damage to Carmel's premier asset — its beach," councilman Ken Talmage said. "Nor will I be responsible for contributing to the increasing health concerns of our residents."

After fielding an increasing number of complaints about wood smoke drifting over the beach bluffs and charcoal marring the beach's famous white sands, the forest and beach commission, and then the city council, took the steps this spring to limit beach fires by developing a plan calling for 26 fire rings and other restrictions. But a resident appealed the plan to the California Coastal



PHOTO/KATHY BANG

Beautiful summer nights mean more people gathering around fires on the beach — which leads to dirty sand and bad air, say those who want the fires banned.

Commission, which isn't set to consider the issue until later this year.

See FIRES page 20A

More employee turmoil at city hall

■ Hostile workplace claim settled for \$125K; Hanson angrily retires

By MARY SCHLEY

COMPLAINTS FROM a police dispatcher who said she endured harassment, discrimination and mistreatment at the Carmel Police Department were settled Monday — without her even filing a lawsuit — when the city council agreed to pay Deborah Hidalgo \$125,000.

Meanwhile, after being warned that strong language he used while on the job might be construed as harassment of a fellow employee who happened to hear the comments, John Hanson abruptly retired Tuesday, saying he was worried that continuing to work for the city would cause him to "have a heart attack and die."

Hidalgo — who handled parking enforcement from 1987 to 1992 and then returned to work as a dispatcher in 2005 —

See EMPLOYEES page 16A

Pumpkin smashing to become sanctioned event

By MARY SCHLEY

EMBRACING A long-running Halloween tradition that used to be considered akin to vandalism, the Carmel City Council voted Tuesday to authorize the closure of the town's main street for a pumpkin-rolling contest as part of the city's birthday celebration Oct. 31.

"The activity of rolling pumpkins down Ocean Avenue at night during the weeks surrounding Halloween has been a long-standing, albeit unauthorized, tradition in Carmel," library and community activities director Janet Bombard explained to the council Aug. 4. "Community activities staff is requesting permission to incorporate the activity into the annual City Birthday Party and Parade, allowing residents the opportunity to safely and legally roll a pumpkin down Ocean Avenue."

Not only would it be fun, it would add a new ele-

See PUMPKINS page 21A

WATER COPS POSING AS RESTAURANT CUSTOMERS

By KELLY NIX

RESTAURANT OWNERS, beware: Water spies could be among your customers.

In an effort to make sure restaurants are not wasting even small amounts of water, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District employees are posing as customers to catch restaurants in the act of offering or serving customers water before they request it.

The investigations begin when somebody rats out a place where they recently ate.

"When someone says, 'I was at the Blank and Blank Grill and they were serving water without the customer asking,' we do try to confirm that," water district general manager Dave Stoldt told The Pine Cone this week.

The water district's mission is simple. Unidentified district employees sit down, look over the menu and wait to see if they're served water without asking for it. If the restaurant

violates the rule, they're busted. Fines range from \$100 to \$500.

Four Peninsula restaurants that were recently issued "first offense courtesy notices," or warnings, for improperly serving water should expect to draw interest from the district's new espionage program.

"We will probably show up at each of those restaurants at some point in time, and sit down and order a meal," Stoldt said.

Those businesses are Il Fornaio in Carmel, Lalla Grill in Del Monte Shopping Center, TusCa Ristorante at the Hyatt in Monterey, and First Awakenings in Pacific Grove, all of which were warned to stop serving water unsolicited.

"Presently our policy is to only issue a fine if a district employee verifies the offense," Stoldt said. "A first offense courtesy notice can result from any person reporting it to us."

See WATER page 16A

Cities — and traffic — gearing up for Concours Week

By MARY SCHLEY

WITH CONCOURS Week ever growing in activity and popularity, city officials have engaged in lengthy discussion about how best to handle congestion in Carmel, while other cities are also notifying residents of upcoming traffic jams and street closures. In town, parking restrictions and other measures — including free shuttles between the Mission and downtown for area workers — are being taken to try to reduce traffic jams and ensure safe passage for emergency vehicles on the already narrow streets.

Carmel Police Cmdr. Paul Tomasi warned residents to plan ahead, especially if they have medical needs or other special considerations, for the tie-ups that are bound to occur during the Concours on the Avenue Tuesday, Aug. 11, and the Pebble Beach Concours Tour d'Elegance Thursday, Aug. 13. Both events involve closing several blocks of Ocean Avenue, and the Concours on the Avenue also includes side streets on the north and south sides of the main drag.

"During both of these events, Ocean Avenue and surrounding streets will be closed to through traffic, and the city encourages residents and visitors to use Carpenter Street and Rio Road to access and exit the city," he said.

To help keep traffic flowing, parking will be temporarily banned in areas that have become "choke points" during past years. "Of most concern have been the islands along Junipero," Tomasi said. "These will be roped off and posted as No Parking."

Also, Mountain View from Junipero to Torres will be closed Tuesday through Thursday, and Torres, Santa Rita and Guadalupe streets between Ocean and Sixth avenues will be closed for part of the day Tuesday and Thursday.

Furthermore, downtown workers and others can park for free in designated lots at the Carmel Mission and ride a shuttle to Sunset Center at San Carlos and Ninth on those days between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.

See TRAFFIC page 19A

Gridlock at Bixby Bridge



PHOTO/COURTESY BILL NYE

Times Square on New Year's Eve? Trafalgar Square on V-E Day? No, it's a dirt road in Big Sur — every summer weekend. See page 10A.