

The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 101 No. 42

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

October 16, 2015

TRUSTED BY LOCALS AND LOVED BY VISITORS SINCE 1915

Packing out what the losers left behind



PHOTO/STEVE BENOIT

These hikers in the Ventana Wilderness are carrying the usual accoutrements — change of clothes, bedrolls and even a tent or two. But what's that stuff in the clear plastic bags? See page 26A.

Helicopter shuttle to Big Sur event causes stir

By CHRIS COUNTS

MONTEREY COUNTY'S code enforcement staff is investigating whether the use of helicopters to transport dozens of people to a gathering on Garrapata Ridge in Big Sur in September violated any laws.

Scott Bogan, who lives in Big Sur, told The Pine Cone he watched the helicopters deliver numerous guests to a private residence on the ridge, which is located about 10 miles south of Carmel. He said helicopter use in Big Sur is becoming more common — and he considers the loud noise they make a nuisance.

"They disrupt the peace and serenity Big Sur is known for," Bogan said. "They create a level of noise pollution that's detrimental to the quality of life most of us seek here."

Bogan said he's also concerned about the impact helicopters have on wildlife, and he's worried a crash could spark a devastating wildfire. He said that helicopter crashes have started fires before, and he noted that the Pines Fire in 2002, which scorched more than 60,000 acres near San Diego, was started when a helicopter clipped a power line.

Two weeks before the Garrapata Ridge incident, Bogan said he watched one helicopter travel "less than 100 feet" above a house along the coast. "It was flying so low I could see people in the cabin," he recalled.

Bogan predicts helicopter traffic down the coast will only increase. "Is this the future of Big Sur?" he asked.

It is unclear if the county can ultimately prohibit helicopters from landing on private property. But for now, the county is taking a stance against the practice — at least without a permit. A

See **CHOPPERS** page 26A

Supes asked to affirm Mehdipour mothball plan

By KELLY NIX

COUNTY PLANNERS have recommended that the board of supervisors next week deny Massy Mehdipour's appeal of a "mothballing" plan that would require her to protect her crumbling Pebble Beach house from further damage.

Some of her neighbors and local preservationists claim the existing ramshackle house, designed by Richard Neutra and built in 1958, is historic, and they want the government to force her to preserve it. Mehdipour dismisses such claims and believes she should be allowed to build a new house, designed by the late architect Ricardo Legoretta, in its place.

The mandatory mothballing plan, which was approved by the county's historic resource review board Sept. 3, will be considered by county supervisors next week after Mehdipour asked them to overturn it. On Tuesday, county planners released a two-page report calling for supervisors to affirm it.

The recommendation is yet another stumbling block for Mehdipour, the wealthy CEO of tech company Jotter, who purchased the structure in 2004 for \$4.5 million in hopes of tearing it down and replacing it with a nearly 12,000-square-foot house.

The home was not considered significant when she bought it; however, her plans were foiled when local preservationists caught on to the building's provenance

and launched a campaign to stop her.

Since 2014, the house has been listed on the California Register of Historical Resources, according to the county report, prepared by senior planner Luis A. Osorio, and approved by planning director Mike Novo and resource management agency director Carl Holm.

See **MEHDIPOUR** page 24A



PHOTO/KELLY NIX

Massy Mehdipour says she spent more than \$125,000 to shore up her structurally unsound Pebble Beach house. Now, county officials want to require her to spend a lot more to protect it.

COASTAL COMMISSION, CITY REMAIN AT ODDS OVER BEACH FIRES

By MARY SCHLEY

AFTER MEETING with officials from the California Coastal Commission Friday to discuss how to develop a beach-fire program that would please the state agency as well the city, local officials thought they might get a reprieve from the commission's stance that the coun-

cil has to lift its emergency ordinance banning beach fires on weekends and holidays.

But they didn't.

"Is the Oct. 2 letter in effect? I ask because here we are on a Friday, and I would like to know whether the CCC agrees that fires are not allowed today and over the long weekend. I have no doubt someone will test whether our urgency ordinance is in effect. Do you think it is?" Mayor Jason Burnett said in an Oct. 9 email to coastal commission district director Dan Carl. "We will protect public health regardless, but I'd hope that our efforts to do so do not get us crosswise with the CCC (at least until you can assess the data and science), especially in light of the good outcome to today's meeting."

The debate is whether the coastal commission's staff will agree with local air official Richard Stedman's conclusions that the smoke from beach fires constitutes a hazard to health and safety — the reason cited by the council when it enacted the emergency ban, which is set to run until next September.

Carl responded Saturday morning that the coastal staff is standing behind its enforcement letter, which determined the city's emergency ban on beach fires is unenforceable because it wasn't adopted in accordance with the Coastal Act, and beach fires don't constitute a sudden emergency because they have been allowed — and are explicitly permitted in the city's Local Coastal Program — for decades.

See **PACREP** page 15A

See **FIRES** page 27A

Paving the way to the future

By ELAINE HESSER

MOST PEOPLE don't think much about asphalt — until they hit a pothole or have to sit in a long line of traffic while a road's being repaired. John Smith of Monterey thinks about it a lot, however. For the past 17 years, he's been working on an idea that would change the way roads are repaired, and now he's ready to move into the next phase of research and development, and is looking to the public for support.

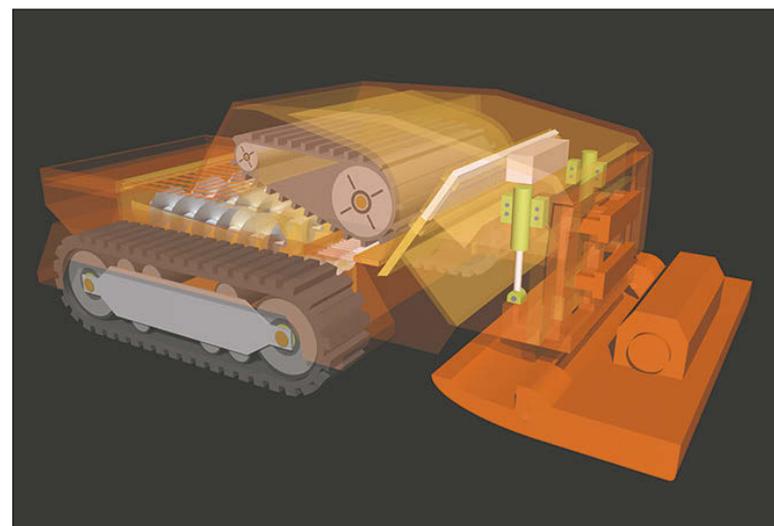
Smith is a Carmel High graduate who's made a career in electrical engineering and computer science. He works for IBM and has

also worked for Lockheed. And, he said, it's because of his lack of background in paving and road construction that he hasn't been able to get taxpayer-funded grants intended to facilitate improvements to the nation's transportation infrastructure.

When he approached companies that did paving to ask for support, he was largely met with an attitude of, "The way we do it works fine."

Smith respectfully disagrees. Additionally, he sees his initial lack of background as the reason he was able to think dif-

ferently. Instead of existing technology that uses a flat blade to spread asphalt on the road, Monterey resident John Smith proposes this futuristic paver that will adjust for irregularities in the road surface and speed road repairs.



See **PAVING** page 23A