

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## Brilliant blue skies greet Pro-Am



PHOTOS/KERRY BELSER

Sure, it rains some years, but the truth is that the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am usually has good weather, and this year was no exception for the preliminary events and even the first round of competition. During the 3M Celebrity Shoot-out Wednesday, Clint Eastwood signed autographs (top left) and Bill Murray discussed strategy with Huey Lewis (left). On Thursday, Jake Owen and Jordan Spieth (above) played Spyglass. See our special section inside for complete coverage of the Pro-Am and everything around it.

## Coastal commission chief fired after marathon meeting

By KELLY NIX

DESPITE AN outpouring of support for California Coastal Commission executive director Charles Lester, commissioners voted 7-5 Wednesday to fire him following an impassioned meeting that crept well into the night.

Pleas from droves of Lester's supporters — including Leon Panetta, the CEO of the Pebble Beach Company and numerous public officials — were not enough to stop the commission from terminating Lester's employment after less than five years on the job.

At the coastal commission meeting in Morro Bay, Lester issued a brief statement following the announcement of the closed session vote, saying he had "worked hard" and "accomplished a lot," and that it had been a privilege to serve the agency. He also credited all of those who supported him.

"So if there is any silver lining, I am so energized for all the people that came together for this," Lester said after 9 p.m. just before the meeting wrapped up. "This was a spontaneous expression of commitment to the coast of California, and we should all be proud of that."

But with all that public support, a looming question remains: Why was Lester fired? In advance of the vote, the state's biggest

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## Panetta, Lucius trade views on Israel, ISIS

By CHRIS COUNTS

SPEAKING BEFORE about 150 people Feb. 8 at Congregation Beth Israel in Carmel Valley, two candidates vying for retiring Congressman Sam Farr's seat tackled some of the most challenging foreign policy issues the United States is facing today in the Middle East.

Aside from a few partisan jabs, there were only subtle differences between the views of Jimmy Panetta, a Democrat, and Casey Lucius, a Republican.

The candidates forum was organized by Todd Hornik, a member of the congregation and, like Panetta, a deputy district attorney for Monterey County. Hornik started by asking the candidates to describe the current state of U.S.-Israeli relations, and explain how each would strengthen that bond.

Lucius cited President Barack Obama's infamous failure to back up his "red line" threat against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and his subsequent nuclear weapons deal with Iran as examples of how the country's relationship with Israel "has been damaged over the past seven years." She said Americans need to "work with Israel" to stop the flow of weapons to terrorists and support defense systems like Israel's Iron Dome that have saved thousands of lives.

### 'Our strongest ally'

"Israel is one of our most important security relationships," explained Lucius, a Pacific Grove City Councilwoman who served in the United States Navy and taught at the Naval Postgraduate School and Naval War College. "Unfortunately, Israel is surrounded by threats."

The son of Leon Panetta — whom Farr replaced in the House of Representatives — Panetta described the U.S.-Israeli relationship as "tense" and "not the best, but not the worst." He also described Israel as more than just an ally.

"They're family," said Panetta, a Carmel Valley resident who served in the Navy reserve and earned a Bronze Star during a tour in Afghanistan. "The United States must always be committed to protecting Israel, which is our strongest ally and the only democracy in Middle East."

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## Plans to use event center as gourmet store, restaurant get favorable, if tentative, response

By MARY SCHLEY

A FLEDGLING proposal to turn the building at Seventh and Dolores into a gourmet food shop and restaurant when it's not being used for events received a guarded, but positive, response from the planning commission Wednesday night.

The plans — which call for high-end purveyors to offer gourmet products and prepared items to eat on the premises or take home — would require amendments to the city's zoning code before they could be allowed.

### Planning commissioner: The city 'has a tradition of being creative'

Operating under the name CPines7 LLC, the group that owns the former bank building at Dolores and Seventh — and obtained permits three years ago to operate it as an event venue — submitted a proposal to use the larger of the two buildings on the property for a food market and eatery that would offer gourmet products, prepared foods and sandwiches, baked goods, confections, coffee, drinks, wine and other merchandise, all supplied by local merchants.

Prepared foods and drinks would be sold in disposable containers for consumption on or off-site, and tables and chairs would be available inside — including on a new mezzanine constructed along the north side of the building — as well as out-

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## Beach fires set for March council meeting

### Law on wood-burning fireplaces also in the works

By MARY SCHLEY

THE MUCH debated issue of fires on Carmel Beach — whether they are a deadly pollutant or just a fun pastime, how many should be allowed, if people should be permitted to use real wood or be limited to propane, where they should be built and how they should be controlled — is set to return to the city council for discussion at its March 1 meeting, Mayor Jason Burnett said this week.

At the Feb. 2 council meeting, resident Jeanne McCulloch presented a petition with nearly 300 signatures asking the city to continue allowing some wood-burning fires on the beach, rather than banning them altogether, as a narrow majority of the council wants.

A handful of other members of the public also stood to defend the tradition, including those who reminisced about