

The Carmel Pine Cone

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Love ship sails on Nevada desert

A sandy wasteland might seem like a strange destination for a ship, but that's where the Anostraca was headed when it set sail in late August from Big Sur. Nothing is ordinary about the boat, which served as limousine and makeshift wedding chapel (right) last week at the annual Burning Man gathering in Nevada. See page 9A.



PHOTO/MICHAEL TROUTMAN, DMT IMAGING

Beach fires burning again

■ One neighbor complaint filed so far

By MARY SCHLEY

WITH SMOKE from the Soberanes Fire — now more than 102,500 acres and remaining at 60 percent containment — no longer drifting over the Monterey Peninsula, the regional air quality boss quietly lifted his ban on beach fires Tuesday.

Richard Stedman, chief officer of the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, had imposed the prohibition on wood fires and propane barbecues on Peninsula beaches as air quality degraded due to smoke from the wildfire, which was started in Garrapata State Park by an illegal campfire July 22.

On the afternoon of Sept. 6, city workers unlocked the new fire pits, which had been covered and closed with a chain, and posted signs stating that wood fires are allowed in the city-provided pits south of Eighth Avenue, while propane fires are permitted on the sand along that stretch of beach, as long as they are at least 25 feet from the bluffs. Fires of both kinds can be burning between 4 and 10 p.m. daily.

See FIRES page 15A

Voters to decide if they want to keep paying park tax

By CHRIS COUNTS

A TAX that raises \$1.2 million annually for the Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District expires in three years, and voters will have an opportunity to decide Nov. 8 if they want to keep paying it. The ballot measure will need the backing of two-thirds of voters to pass.

Supporters of the tax say the park district has a stellar reputation for managing 27 properties covering more than 13,000 acres, including Garland Ranch Regional Park and Palo Corona Regional Park. They contend the money supplied by the tax is essential to the agency's operations.

But a local taxpayers group is opposing the assessment, in part, because it says the MPRPD's properties are located too far from where most people on the Peninsula live.

The parcel tax will amount to just over \$25 per year for some property owners, while others will pay less. Park district board member Kelly Sorensen told The Pine Cone the money represents about 20 percent of the agency's budget. Unlike the tax that expires in 2019, the new tax doesn't have a sunset clause.

"It's a small amount of money, but it's very important to us," Sorensen said. "It would be a blow if it doesn't pass. It would be a hardship for the community if our parks aren't being well cared for."

To encourage the public to vote Yes in November, a website — parksandopenspace.org — has been launched.

Besides making the case for passing the tax, the website lists a number of local leaders who endorse it, including Congressman Sam Farr, State Sen. Bill Monning, Assemblyman Mark Stone, Supervisor Jane Parker and Pacific Grove Mayor Bill Kampe. The tax is also endorsed by a variety of nonprofit groups, including the Big Sur Land Trust, LandWatch Monterey County and the Point Lobos Foundation.

'Every single penny'

Parker and four others submitted a pro-Measure E argument to be included on the ballot. They say the tax will "protect and preserve" important natural areas for future generations, "so they can experience nature the same way we do."

"Every single penny would support parks and open spaces," the letter reads. "And an independent citizens oversight committee would continue to review the use of these funds to ensure they are spent as promised."

Opposing the ballot measure is the Monterey Peninsula Taxpayers Association, which submitted an opposition argument to be included on the ballot. Written by the group's president, Ron Pasquinelli, the statement accuses the park district of buying land too far from where most residents live.

See TAX page 14A

Lucius releases tax return; Panetta says he will, too

By KELLY NIX

CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATE Casey Lucius on Thursday released financial disclosures she filed with the U.S. House of Representatives and her 2015 tax return, and she called on opponent Jimmy Panetta to do the same.

In a release to the press, Lucius unveiled the documents, saying she felt it was necessary to be "completely transparent to the voters."

"I'm running for a federal office, so I think people deserve complete transparency," Lucius told The Pine Cone. "It's been disappointing that we are not getting transparency from the presidential candidates, so I wanted to step it up and provide that transparency in this district."

After The Pine Cone asked whether he would consider releasing his 2015 tax return, Panetta said Thursday afternoon he plans on doing that.

"As public servants, we are open to it even though it's not standard practice in a congressional race," Panetta told The Pine Cone. "We'd be happy to get them together."

According to the 2015 tax return Lucius filed with her husband, Bob, the couple earned a combined \$178,307. The income includes about a half-year's salary from Lucius' job at the Naval Postgraduate School, from which she had to

Former council member, city settle lawsuit

By MARY SCHLEY

A SMALL-CLAIMS case filed against the city by former councilwoman Victoria Beach over reimbursement for an airline ticket she never used was settled in court Friday, with her receiving \$390.05 and reimbursement for half of the \$45 filing fee, as well as a promise from city administrator Chip Rerig that the policy on travel by council members will be reviewed.

Beach filed suit in June, arguing that taxpayers should pay her back for an airline ticket she bought to Washington D.C. for Junipero Serra's canonization a year ago. In the complaint, Beach said she purchased the \$1,375.30 fare based on then-city administrator Doug Schmitz' approval of the "official nature," of the trip, but that Schmitz' decision was reversed after city attorney Don Freeman advised him the canonization could not be considered an official event without council approval. She ended up attending a California Public Utilities Commission hearing in San Francisco

See LAWSUIT page 15A



A family enjoys hiking at Garland Ranch Regional Park, where maintenance and upkeep depend on a tax that's on the November ballot, park officials say.

resign in June 2015, so she could run for federal office. They had \$136,128 in taxable income, the return shows.

The Luciuses earned \$1,592 in capital gains and \$1,850 in dividends, including \$1,023 from an Edward Jones account, and \$43,878 from Bob Lucius' military pension. They reported a total of \$30,179 in itemized deductions, including \$16,869 in state and local taxes, \$10,910 in interest and \$2,400 in charitable donations. They paid \$24,761 in federal income tax.

Lucius said releasing the information is especially important in light of presidential candidate Donald Trump's unwillingness to release his past tax returns, and the reluctance of rival Hillary Clinton to explain who made donations to her foundation and may have gotten special treatment while she was secretary of state.

"Hiding secrets from the public," Lucius said in the press

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\$178,307 in income and a federal tax bill of \$24,761