

The Carmel Pine Cone

Volume 96 No. 27

On the Internet: www.carmelpinecone.com

July 2-8, 2010

YOUR SOURCE FOR LOCAL NEWS, ARTS AND OPINION SINCE 1915

Big response keeps two fires from spreading

■ Oily rags blamed in C.V.; unknown cause in P.B.

By MARY BROWNFIELD

SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION of oily rags probably caused the fire that destroyed a carport and part of a Carmel Valley Village home late Sunday morning, according to Carmel Valley Fire Division Chief Ron Lemos.

And Cal Fire investigator Cliff Williams is still working to determine what sparked a half-acre blaze that threatened a golf course, school facilities and homes in Pebble Beach Wednesday.

In Carmel Valley, a neighbor walking past the home on twisty El Caminito Road noticed the house fire and called 911 shortly after 11 a.m. June 27, scrambling engines and firefighters from Carmel Valley, Monterey County Regional and Cypress fire protection districts. By the time the first of them arrived, the carport and a portable hot tub it contained were engulfed, and the fire had spread to the roof of the main house and was burning in the attic.

Because the weather was hot and windy, and a large field backs the rural home, Lemos also summoned help from Cal Fire should a wildfire erupt.

"We had embers the size of 50-cent pieces dropping into the field," he said. "That was our main concern."

At one point, a small bit of vegetation lit but was quickly extinguished, according to

A wildfire next to Poppy Hills Golf Course in P.B. Wednesday (right) threatened the surrounding neighborhood, and so did a house fire in C.V. Sunday (below). The weather was dry and firefighters went all out to control both fires quickly.



PHOTOS/COURTESY CAL FIRE (TOP), PETE POITRAS

See **FIRES** page 7A

CUSD readies for influx of students from poor schools

By MARY BROWNFIELD

CARMEL PUBLIC schools could see a flood of new students after a law pushed through the state Legislature on an emergency basis this year takes effect. The Open Enrollment Act, part of a bill authored by Sen. Gloria Romero, requires school districts to accept transfer students from any of the 1,000 worst public schools in the state, unless their enrollment would cause financial hardship or overcrowded classrooms.

The Open Enrollment Act, SB 4, signed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger Jan. 7, was passed to "enhance parental choice in education by providing additional options to pupils to enroll in public schools throughout the state without regard to the residence of their parents."

Carmel public schools consistently achieve high test scores and win accolades, making them likely destinations for students in nearby underperforming schools. The list of those schools will be compiled based on state test scores and will undoubtedly include more than a few campuses in Monterey County.

The Carmel Unified School District board of education met Tuesday afternoon to discuss the potential impacts of the act, which remains vague, as the specific rules have not been written and the list of lowest-performing schools has yet to be drafted, according to CUSD Superintendent Marvin Biasotti.

"The bill gives us a right to protect class size, but it doesn't say how, and against financial hardship created by this bill, but again, it doesn't define what that means," he said. "So right now, we don't even have enough information to

See **STUDENTS** page 10A

NEW VOICES HEARD IN WATER DEBATE

■ Unions, minority groups demand quick action on supply

By PAUL MILLER

WHEN THEY began at Monterey City Hall Monday evening, the Public Utilities Commission's hearings on the proposed regional water project, which includes a large desal plant in Marina to supply water for the Monterey Peninsula, seemed like they would mainly consist of familiar arguments made by the usual suspects: Local activists, citing powerful state and federal environmental laws, urging caution and delay, versus elected officials, businessmen and steelhead advocates warning of dire consequences if the Peninsula's water shortage goes on much longer.

But Tuesday evening at Seaside's Oldemeyer Center, faces from a new constituency packed the meeting room, and previously unheard comments were spoken into the microphone.

"Working families in this county are strongly in favor of the regional water project, and we think it needs to happen immediately," said **Juan Uranga**, executive director of an Hispanic community advocacy organization based in Salinas.

"The water shortage threatens the economic viability of our entire community," added **Carlos Ramos**, a business consultant from Salinas. "It threatens the ability to provide jobs and housing, and we need to move forward on the desal plant without hesitation."

"We don't want our rates to go up, but we need water to survive," said Seaside City Councilman **Ian Oglesby**.

See **DESAL** page 9A

Lack of funds stalls Concours on the Avenue

By MARY BROWNFIELD

AFTER PUTTING their considerable time, money and energy into the Carmel-by-the-Sea Concours on the Avenue held each August for the past three years, Doug and Genie Freedman were forced to cancel this year's show due to an insurmountable financial gap, Doug Freedman said Tuesday.

"It's suspended for 2010, but we have every hope that the momentum that we lose can somehow be regained," he said from his hometown of Atlanta, Ga. "We're eternally optimistic, even at this tough moment. We have to look to the future, and I've never given up on anything, so we won't give up on Concours on the Avenue and Carmel's deserving its own signature moment."

Three successful years, but the recession dried up the cash

ally shown elsewhere on the Monterey Peninsula during the week headlined by the world-famous Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.

With the help of a handful of experts in their field, the Freedmans developed the classes and the application process, established The Carmel Foundation as the benefiting charity, hired architect Brian Congleton to design the show field and the ramp upon which winners were driven during the afternoon awards ceremony, gathered sponsor support, organized volunteers and staged the successful show — which was free for spectators — in 2007, 2008 and 2009. American, British and European trucks, sports cars, family vehicles, racecars,

A former Concours d'Elegance and Concorso Italiano judge who was also heavily involved in the Ferrari Club of America, Doug Freedman, along with his wife, had held an annual party in Carmel during Concours Week for several years. In 2006, they received city council approval for an upscale judged exhibition downtown that would feature the finest vehicles not typically

hot rods, muscle cars, minicars, motorcycles and other interesting vehicles, each with a placard telling its story, lined 14 landscaped downtown blocks.

Freedman said he received hundreds of applications for the Concours on the Avenue's 160 spots before the June 30 deadline this year.

"I'm always just amazed. I open every envelope like a kid in a candy store — it's such a thrill to see what's going to be in there," he said. Entries cost \$250 each, with any amount in

See **CONCOURS** page 12A

City sets \$13.5M budget without cutting jobs

By MARY BROWNFIELD

THE CARMEL City Council approved its \$13.5 million 2010/2011 annual budget at its June 16 meeting after figuring out how to take fewer dollars from reserves while still not implementing layoffs. The budget took effect July 1 at the start of the city's fiscal year.

The draft version of the budget, which was released in April, called for \$14 million in spending and would have required \$810,818 from reserves. After hearing from the council at a June 2 budget workshop that members did not want to raid reserves but realized they would need to use some of the savings to balance the budget, city administrator Rich Guillen with several scenarios that included more income and some savings.

On the plus side, he figured in the \$50,000 Pacific Grove is paying for the services of Carmel Police Cpl. Steve Rana, who is handing out traffic tickets in the city two days a week, and \$61,000 in state taxes which are intended to compensate the city for holding public meetings in compliance with the Brown Act.

See **BUDGET** page 14A