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Commission OKs beach bathrooms — again

By MARY SCHLEY

THIS TIME, there wasn't a parade people complaining that public restrooms on the bluffs above Carmel Beach would be too obtrusive, or questioning whether they are needed at all, so the planning commission last Thursday approved scaled down plans for the building that will replace the porta-potties on Scenic Road at Santa Lucia.

The city council will probably consider architect Rob Carver's design at its January meeting, according to associate planner Marc Wiener.

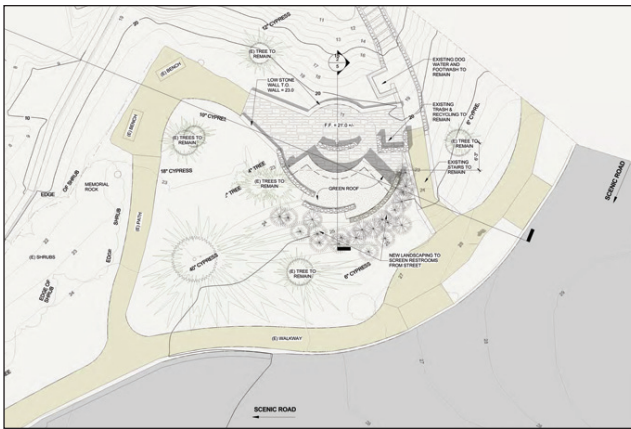
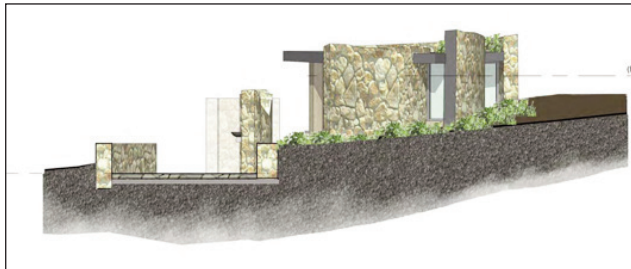
Carver changed the design after the planning commission approved his proposal in June, only to withdraw that approval the following month. A workshop hosted by the city council in August yielded direction to Carver to make the building smaller and lower, to better blend it into its site on the bluff above the beach, to include no more than two restrooms and locate the sinks outside them, and to eliminate the shower, skylights and solar panels.

In response, Carver proposed a concrete and stone building containing two ADA-accessible bathrooms — one for women and one for men — two exterior wash basins, a janitor's closet, a green roof, walls to shield the building from the beach and the road, and a water fountain.

"I asked the mayor who my client was, and he said it was you, the planning commission," Carver said when he got up to speak at the Nov. 15 meeting.

He then described the alterations he has made to the

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DRAWINGS/CARVER + SCHICKETANZ

Architect Rob Carver's revised plans for public bathrooms at Scenic and Santa Lucia show a smaller, lower building (top) surrounded by curving walls, as shown in the site plan (bottom).

Council to consider leasing Flanders

By MARY SCHLEY

ENOUGH PEOPLE seem interested in leasing Flanders Mansion and renovating it at their own expense that the city council will discuss the possibility at its December meeting, Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett said this week.

The fate of the historic Tudor-style mansion, which sits on the edge of Mission Trail park, has been the subject of debate for 40 years. During the past decade, the city has been focused on selling it — an effort that's been stymied by two lawsuits, despite a decisive public vote in favor of off-loading the building to a private buyer.

After the council discussed a few proposals in closed sessions, Burnett, city administrator Jason Stilwell, Vice Mayor Ken Talmage and city attorney Don Freeman jointly decided to put the subject on the agenda for the Dec. 4 meeting.

"We all decided that since we've received at this point a couple of lease offers, the best way to systematically and fairly review those is to bring to the council the possibility of

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Suspect nabbed in break-in on Santa Rita

By MARY SCHLEY

POLICE ARRESTED 26-year-old Santa Rita Street resident Charles Gopi Wednesday afternoon for burglarizing a neighbor's home and selling the stolen items at a local pawn shop, Carmel Police detective Rachelle Lightfoot told The Pine Cone.

Gopi, who has had drug-related run-ins with police in the past, is suspected of breaking into a house at Santa Rita and Fourth on Nov. 11, though the burglary wasn't discovered by the residents until Nov. 16, when they returned to find their home ransacked and electronics, tools and other valuables taken. Witness reports and surveillance camera footage from the house narrowed the timeframe and helped police identify Gopi as the suspect, according to Lightfoot, who visited a local pawn shop to see if he had left any items for sale there.

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Two die in C.V. crashes

By MARY SCHLEY

A 37-YEAR-OLD Carmel Valley woman died Saturday morning when the truck in which she was a passenger ran off the road and landed on its roof in a ravine, according to the California Highway Patrol. The driver was drunk, the CHP said. And a newspaper delivery man was killed early Tuesday when he crashed his truck into a tree on East Garzas Road, also in the valley. CHP public information officer Bob Lehman identified the woman as Melinda Grewell, but the identity of the delivery man wasn't available.

The first wreck occurred on Carmel Valley Road in Cachagua shortly after 10 a.m. Nov. 17, when 34-year-old Nason Road resident



Kristopher Timmons in 2003

See **CRASHES** page 12A

FEDS SPEND BIG \$\$\$ ON JAZZ BUSES, SHELTERS

Traffic jams tie up New Monterey

By KELLY NIX

IS IT reasonable for a bus shelter to cost \$60,000 — the price of a new Porsche? Monterey-Salinas Transit officials think so. And if it's being paid for by U.S. and California taxpayers, so much the better, they say.

If you've driven on Lighthouse Avenue in New Monterey recently, you couldn't have missed the construction snarl, all part of MST's \$5 million project to install new bus shelters as part of a "rebranding" effort.

"So far, virtually all the feedback has been positive regarding the buses and shelters," said MST assistant general manager Hunter Harvath.

The project even drew U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood to a ribbon-cutting event Nov. 12 at MST's Sand City Station near Target.



PHOTO/KELLY NIX

Crews finish working on a nearly \$29,000 MST bus shelter in front of Kinko's on Lighthouse Ave. in Monterey.

But the project is pricey, with 14 "regular" 11-foot-long bus shelters costing \$28,105 each and six "mega" 22-foot shelters priced at \$59,800 apiece. Seven of MST's buses have been vinyl-wrapped in bold new "JAZZ" graphics at \$9,000 a pop.

At a handful of stops along the 6.75-mile route getting the makeover where there wasn't enough space for shelters, MST installed small signs for \$6,725 each.

The project has had its share of snags, including at least one costly construction snafu and some of the worst daily gridlock Lighthouse Avenue in Monterey has ever seen, angering drivers and killing business for shops along the route.

MST insists the cost of the project — in money and inconvenience — is worth it, because the new shelters will increase the agency's current ridership of 3,800 per day by offering more convenient service and even entertaining passengers while they wait for the bus. The project is also employing dozens of construction workers.

Still, some believe taxpayers were taken for a ride and that the project is a waste of state and federal dollars during a national fiscal crisis.

"From a personal standpoint," said Monterey resident Rick Heuer, "to spend that level of money for wrapping buses and building bus stops seem a bit much."

MST points out that the funds to pay for the project weren't drawn from local coffers, including MST's general fund or passenger fares. About \$2.8 million for the project came from federal tax dollars, while the remainder was approved by state voters via a 2006 proposition that included transportation bonds.

That money is being spent while the federal government is racking up unprecedented deficits and borrowing

Despite the deficit, plenty of money to "rebrand" MST

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