

Judge rules against town, open-space group in suit over ridge development

By **DEIRDRE McCROHAN**
 dmccrohan@thearknewspaper.com

A Marin judge has ruled against the town of Tiburon and a local open-space group in their challenge of the county's certification of an environmental impact report for a proposed 43-lot home development on the Tiburon Ridge.

In his ruling, issued Jan. 22, Superior Court Judge James T. Chou wrote that, having reviewed additional briefs filed since his tentative ruling last November, "the court is not persuaded by petitioners' supplemental arguments that it is necessary to reverse or modify its tentative order."

See **DEVELOP, PAGE 14**

Belvedere and Tiburon retain top marks in tobacco report

By **DEIRDRE McCROHAN**
 dmccrohan@thearknewspaper.com

Tiburon and Belvedere once again earned top marks on an annual American Lung Association evaluation of tobacco policies across the country, helping to make Marin the first county in California whose cities and unincorporated areas earned straight A's across the board.

Like last year, both Tiburon Peninsula cities scored an A grade in the association's 2020 report, re-

See **TOBACCO, PAGE 20**

Crushed.



CLARA LU / FOR THE ARK

San Francisco 49er fans packed Sam's Anchor Cafe on Tiburon's Main Street Feb. 2 for Super Bowl LIV, where the Niners were just minutes away from defeating the Kansas City Chiefs and capturing a record-tying sixth championship. But down 20-10, the Chiefs mounted a stunning comeback to win 31-20 for their first Super Bowl victory in 50 years.



STOCK PHOTO VIA SUASNEWS.COM

S. Marin fire district to introduce drone program

Officials want tool for fire and rescue operations by spring

By **HANNAH WEIKEL**
 hweikel@thearknewspaper.com

When a massive mudslide swept a house with a woman inside down a steep hill in Sausalito

last February, first responders from the Southern Marin Fire Protection District had a hard time safely navigating the site and searching for additional victims — until another agency arrived and deployed a drone.

Using the unmanned aircraft system, which was equipped with a camera, they were able

See **DRONES, PAGE 17**

Belvedere pushing ahead with plans to upgrade seawalls

City appears to abandon series of forums; package could be OK'd in weeks

By **HANNAH WEIKEL** and **KEVIN HESSEL**
 hweikel@thearknewspaper.com

Belvedere is moving forward with a multimillion-dollar plan to

shore up its seawalls, with city officials indicating a design concept may be approved as early as next month — though it appears to have abandoned a pledge to hold a series of public forums dedicated solely to collecting feedback on the proposed project and how to fund it.

Last June, the City Council voted to accept a raft of recommendations from a then-newly formed citizen advisory panel, the Committee to Protect Belvedere's Seawalls, Levees and Utilities. The recommendation included exploration into raised pathways and short seawalls running between the shoreline and roadways on San Rafael Avenue and

See **SEAWALLS, PAGE 15**

Parent with background in research is named to school board

By **EMILY LAVIN**
 elavin@thearknewspaper.com

The Reed Union School District board has filled its interim fifth seat with a district parent who heads her own digital marketing firm.

Tiburon resident Liz Webb beat out two other candidates to win appointment to the seat by a 4-0 vote of the board at a special Jan. 27 meeting.

She'll replace Dana Linker Steele, who resigned in December with one year left on an extended five-year term. Linker Steele was first elected to four years on the board in 2011

See **BOARD, PAGE 16**



COMPASS

Let us connect you to homes never seen on the market.

Over 240 homes sold off market in 2018 in Marin County. Don't miss out on the home of your dreams.



Kathleen Brady & Bryan Beaver
 415.847.1491 | 415.987.9967
 kathleen.brady@compass.com
 bryan.beaver@compass.com
 DRE 00958832 DRE 01023448

Seawalls, *continued from page 1*

Beach Road, as well as barriers on low-lying stretches and West Shore Road.

The package, spurred by a study that showed the city would need to raise its seawalls up to 3½ feet to prevent future flooding, is estimated to cost anywhere from \$11 million to \$26 million.

At the time, City Manager Craig Middleton said the city would engage in “a series of public forums” by fall to discuss the recommendation and how the work would be paid for — likely through a combination of grants and a new voter-approved parcel tax, he said. Middleton also noted it will likely take years before construction begins, as the city would require feasibility studies and a lengthy permitting process, while costs couldn’t be pinned down until engineers could examine the final proposal.

However, no such forums took place or have been scheduled.

In the meantime, the city has twice revised the proposal, quietly introduced conceptual renderings and is preparing to bring the topic back to the City Council for discussion on Monday, Feb. 10.

Approval of the concept could come as early as its following meeting, in just 4½ weeks, on March 9, at which point the plans would enter a “schematic phase” to produce more detailed engineer renderings and home in on a cost estimate.

In an interview last week, Middleton said the plans would be difficult and costly to change after that point.

“The easiest time to make changes is early in the process, which is now,” he said.

ways to weigh in

Residents who want to weigh in on the seawall project can:

- View the Jan. 13 revision of the seawall plans, uploaded by The Ark at arkn.ws/seawalljan13rev, then submit comments to Belvedere City Manager Craig Middleton at cmiddleton@cityofbelvedere.org or Mayor Nancy Kemnitzer at nkemnitzer@cityofbelvedere.org.
- View renderings in person and leave written comments at Belvedere City Hall, 450 San Rafael

Conceptual renderings revealed

The most recent renderings, designed for the city by Amsterdam-based One Architecture, added public amenities like shoreline parks, beach-access stairs and landscaping not included in the seawall committee’s recommendation.

A number of major changes were also made to the project’s configuration.

A seawall proposed on Beach Road was shifted from the road’s median to a raised pathway that would run parallel to the existing shoreline sidewalk. In doing so, the design eliminates the existing roundabout at the intersection of Beach Road and San Rafael Avenue and roadside access to the San Francisco Yacht Club, but also avoids the need for retractable gates at each intersection.

Additionally, the seawall along San Rafael Avenue was shifted inward, from the bay side of the existing walking path to the inside of the pathway once it’s raised. This move was largely due to riprap pieces that were found by engineers under some of the existing path during shallow borings in the fall.

“One Architecture was asked to look if there was a way to make it better ... for its effectiveness and for enhancement of our shoreline,” Middleton said in an interview

Ave., open 8 a.m.-noon and 1-4:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday.

- Attend the Feb. 10 or March 9 Belvedere City Council meetings, both set for 6:30 p.m. at City Hall. Public comments on agenda items can be given when council discussion on the item begins.
- Attend the next Committee to Protect Belvedere’s Seawalls, Levees and Utilities meeting in late February, date and time to be announced.

last week.

The concept design altogether leaves out a necessary flood barrier on Main Street in Tiburon, which engineers say would be overtopped and cause flooding in the Belvedere Lagoon in the event of a 100-year storm but not until sea levels rise 1.1 feet as projected by 2050.

Middleton said that he and Tiburon Town Manager Greg Chanis had a few informal conversations early on in the process about a deployable flood barrier along Main Street, but those talks have petered out.

“We really need to get Tiburon re-engaged on the subject. We’ve frankly just been focused on getting the Belvedere pieces as great as we can,” Middleton said, but added that, “the Tiburon piece is going to have to be accomplished at the same time as the Belvedere pieces.”

The Tiburon barrier is by far the cheapest, with estimates between \$60,000 and \$100,000, but officials have not indicated which community would pay for it.

The updated renderings were originally unveiled at the Belvedere City Council’s annual goal-setting retreat just days before Christmas — a half-day event that began at 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 18; no mem-

bers of the public were in attendance. While the seawall plans were a scheduled topic of discussion, there was no indication in the meeting agenda the city would be unveiling conceptual design schematics.

Since then, the city has made a second round of minor adjustments — such as removing two diagonal parking areas on San Rafael Avenue after pushback from nearby residents — and shared the renderings with four West Shore Road residents who would be directly impacted by the seawall, as well as the San Francisco Yacht Club and the Belvedere Land Co., which have properties that would fall outside the Beach Road seawall.

In an interview last week, Middleton said the city is inviting public comment in other ways, such as during agenda items of the project at the regular city meetings in February and March. He also said conceptual renderings of the project will be on display in City Hall for the next two or three weeks, and that residents may stop by to view them and leave written comments and suggestions.

Middleton also gave an overview of the design concepts at the city’s annual Town Hall meeting on Jan. 27.

At The Ark’s press deadline Feb. 3, the project renderings were not available on the city’s website, and the renderings on belvedereseawall.org, a site developed specifically for residents to get information and updates on the seawall project, were outdated.

Committee expresses concern

The Belvedere seawall committee received an update on the plans at its midday

See **SEAWALLS, PAGE 16**

Where FUN Happens!



Tiburon Adventure Camp

Dolphins

2-5 Yrs. Old
Weekly Jumpees
JAMaROO Dance Class
Bubble Pit
And Much More!

Sharks

5-8 Yrs. Old
Weekly Jumpees
Field Trips
TPC Swim Lessons
And Much More!

Extended Camp Hours!
(7am-6pm)

tiburonadventurecamp.org
(415) 435-4366
1185 Tiburon Blvd. 94920



NEW BRIDGE PROGRAMS

LEARN BRIDGE IN A DAY

Saturday, February 22nd, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm
FUN, Fast Overview with Instruction & Play

BEGINNING BRIDGE I

Starting Friday, February 28, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm
5 Sessions
Basic Bidding plus Play of the Hand

BEGINNING BRIDGE II

Starting Friday, April 3, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm
5 Sessions
Play of the Hand with Defense

COMPETITIVE BIDDING

Starting Tuesday March 24, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm
6 Sessions
Competition for Declaring the Contract

WINNING STRATEGIES

Starting Wednesday April 1, 9:30 - 11:30 am
5 Sessions

strawberry.marin.org

Seawalls, *continued from page 15*

meeting Jan. 30, and several members of that committee questioned whether the city is doing enough to solicit public input and expressed concern that most residents haven't been amply exposed to the proposals.

"The more public input we get, the more exposure, the better," said committee member Andy Allen, co-owner of the Belvedere Land Co., which owns several apartment buildings on Beach Road.

Mayor Nancy Kemmitzer, who also sits on the seawall committee, echoed Allen's comments.

"I would certainly like to have a longer rather than shorter period of public comment, and I want to make sure that as much comment as possible gets to the City Council," she said at the meeting.

Committee member Bill Rothman, who voted to back the recommendations but has remained vocally skeptical of the project and the ability to pay for it, noted in an email to The Ark ahead of the meeting that he had not been provided with the renderings and that they weren't available when he stopped by City Hall earlier in the week.

"If the committee members themselves do not even have the benefit of appropriate transparency to arrive at appropriate recommendations, then that is truly not very transparent," he said.

In an ensuing interview, he said the city would have a tough time getting the project funded without the public's support.

"At the end of the discussion, there's going to be a (public) vote. They're going to have to convince two-thirds of the population to approve this," he said. "Somebody might think they're being smart about rushing this through, but they aren't."

Middleton said the city may still hold a special hearing or forum on the seawall project, noting, "We haven't mapped out our public discussion schedule."

"Sometimes those big public meetings aren't the best way to get people's thoughts," he said, adding that some people are nervous to speak in front of crowds. "What you really try to do is get public input in a lot of different ways."

Executive Editor Kevin Hessel contributed to this report. Reporter Hannah Weikel covers the city of Belvedere, as well as crime, courts and public safety issues on the Tiburon Peninsula. Reach her at 415-944-4627.

Board, *continued from page 1*

and ran uncontested in 2015 for another four-year term, through December 2019. However, the Reed district board in 2017 voted to give its current members an extra fifth year to comply with a new state law designed to boost voter turnout by requiring many local governments to move elections to even-numbered years.

Webb, who will be sworn in at the board's Feb. 11 meeting, will serve the remainder of Linker Steele's term, through December, and said she plans to run in the November election to retain the seat.

The 45-year-old has lived in Tiburon with her husband, Jeff, for about six years. They have three children currently enrolled in the district: daughters Emily, a first-grader at Reed Elementary School, and Layne, a third-grader at Bel Aire Elementary School, and son Jack, who is in fifth grade at Bel Aire.

Webb was raised in Santa Barbara and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania, where she majored in political science, international relations and communications. Her first job was for a marketing research firm in New York City that did financial-services testing and consumer research on Wall Street. She moved on to do market research for a consulting firm in Washington, D.C., before taking a job for a California-based company.

In 2005, she founded her own digital marketing research and consulting firm called eVoc Insights, which conducts consumer research to help companies evaluate the experience they're offering customers through websites and apps.

"My job is to listen to clients, understand goals, work with a team to find the right research solution and conduct sound research, then analyze the results and deliver insights," Webb told the board on Jan. 27.

Outside of her career, Webb serves on the board of the nonprofit Children of Shelters, which provides educational support to children living in San Francisco's homeless shelters, and has been an active volunteer within the Reed district. She's a member of the district Parent Teacher Association and volunteers for the Foundation for Reed Schools.

Though the two organizations are different, both help support the success of students in the district, Webb said in an interview.

"You meet a lot of families and parents in different ways, and I've really enjoyed



FRANK FENNEMA / FOR THE ARK

Tiburon resident Liz Webb is the newest member of the Reed Union School District board of trustees. She beat out two other applicants to win appointment to the board's interim fifth seat on Jan. 27. Webb, who has three kids enrolled in the district and heads her own digital marketing research firm, will take over for longtime trustee Dana Linker Steele, who resigned last December, and serve the rest of Linker Steele's term, through December 2020.

being on both of them for different reasons," she said.

This was Webb's second time vying for board appointment. She previously applied in 2018 to fill an interim vacancy created by the resignation of longtime member Susan Lambe Peitz; that spot ultimately went to Belvedere resident Amy Jacobs.

During Webb's interview with the board on Jan. 27, she said she was inspired to apply for the seat by the positive experience she's had during her time in the district, something she credited to a "highly functioning board."

"I feel like I'm ready to do more for my children but also for the schools that have supported us and this community," she told the board.

The board at its Jan. 27 meeting interviewed two other candidates, both district parents: Angela Chang, a former prosecutor for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission who is an active volunteer within the district, and Rajni Natesan, who serves as the chief medical officer of QT Ultrasound, a company that focuses on research, development and commercialization of an automated breast-imaging system. Like Webb, Natesan had previously applied for appointment to the board in 2018.

After hearing about the candidates' experience, what they viewed as the board's pri-

orities and how they have navigated conflict and difficult decisions, among other topics, the board attempted to identify which candidate would be the best fit for the board.

Board member A.J. Brady noted it was important to focus on how the chosen candidate "would complement the four of us and the next four of us."

However, differentiating between the candidates proved tough for the board, with members noting each applicant would be a strong addition.

Among the topics the board weighed was whether it was important for the new member to have experience at all three district schools — and opinion was split.

Jacobs noted Webb would have one child each at Reed and Bel Aire schools and Del Mar Middle School beginning next fall, and Chang has a son in sixth-grade at Del Mar. Natesan, on the other hand, is relatively new to the district, with a child in first grade at Reed school and another one set to start kindergarten next fall.

"I really couldn't imagine doing this job without being connected at some point to all three schools," said Jacobs. "I think it just gives you different exposure to different teachers, different resources, different struggles that parents have."

See **BOARD, NEXT PAGE**

Since 1976



MARIN TREE SERVICE INC.

Specializing in Tree Preservation

Professional Evaluation
Landscape Inspection • Diagnosis of Tree Disorders

Tree Sculpturing
Height Reduction • Removal • View Restoration • Safety Pruning • Cabling

Tree Preservation
Deep Root Fertilization • Irrigation • Soil Aeration

Insect and Disease Control
Environmentally Safe Application with EPA Approved Materials
Including control of Sudden Oak Death



Bob Morey
Certified Arborist #176

Fully Insured
License 648230

415 472-7105

www.marintrees.com

Forde's LARKSPUR SELF STORAGE

Locally Owned & Operated
in the Heart of Marin



Planning a remodel?
Staging your home to put on the market?
Downsizing?
Need more room at your home or business?
Want your garage back?

Proudly Serving the Tiburon Peninsula since 2002!

- Clean and well-maintained storage units and drive-ups
- State-of-the-art security system
- Minutes from the Tiburon Peninsula
- Friendly, professional management
- Competitive rates
- Right off Hwy. 101 North
- Call for our specials

fordestorage.com
42 Industrial Way, Larkspur
415-924-7144
manager@fordestorage.com