

Palo
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Cities slam VTA plan to divert funds to BART

Palo Alto, Mountain View council members among critics of new 10-year scenario

by Gennady Sheyner

When the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority asked voters in 2016 to approve a sales tax increase, the agency promised to use the funds to repair streets, expand the BART system to San Jose and support the efforts of

Mountain View, Palo Alto and Sunnyvale to redesign their rail corridors, among other projects.

Now, staff of the transit agency are pitching an abrupt change of direction: spending all revenue from Measure B over the next decade on the BART extension

and allocating no funding at all for Caltrain improvements, road paving or highway upgrades.

While the VTA's board of directors has not taken action on the proposed scenario, the tentative plan is already angering city leaders throughout Santa Clara County, who are characterizing the abrupt shift as nothing short of a betrayal of public trust by the agency.

Critics of the new proposal have plenty of history to point to.

The VTA's prior tax measures, which were approved in 2000 and 2008, were used primarily to fund BART projects, despite promises to fund transportation projects in other parts of the county. An analysis conducted by the Santa Clara County Department of Roads and Airports estimated that about 80% of the proceeds from those two measures were directed to BART.

To ensure that this didn't happen

again, city and county elected officials included language in Measure B that explicitly caps expenditures on BART Phase II — the 6-mile extension of the system to downtown San Jose and Santa Clara — at 25% of the measure's total revenues. The rest would be divvied up for transportation projects throughout the entire county, including congestion relief along

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Ian Irwin and Carol Kiparsky pet their cat on their backyard deck in Palo Alto on Dec. 2. After getting lost in the wilderness, the couple went missing for nine days in February. Rescuers called it a "miracle" that they were found alive.

COMMUNITY

Nine days in the wilderness

Before the COVID-19 shutdown, a Palo Alto couple went missing in Marin. Now they're telling their story.

by Sue Dremann

The late afternoon hike from their vacation cottage wasn't supposed to take more than 15 minutes. For Palo Altans Carol Kiparsky and Ian Irwin, the idyllic sunset walk along a narrow Marin County trail instead became a nine-day walkabout and a fight for their very survival.

Their disappearance on Feb. 14 set off a massive

search-and-rescue mission, which took helicopters and ground teams over and through the rough terrain near Seahaven/Inverness. Given their ages — she, 77, and he, 72 — the length of time of their absence and weather conditions, authorities at one point declared that the rescue had turned into a recovery mission and started searching Tomales Bay for their remains.

But Kiparsky and Irwin did survive, living off fiddlehead tops of ferns and a few seeps, or puddles, containing muddy water. They were found safe by a search-and-rescue team on Feb. 22. Now recovered but still processing their journey, they agreed to talk to the Palo Alto Weekly on Nov. 25, their first interview since their rescue.

Theirs is a story of survival,

but don't call what they went through an "ordeal," they said. Their experiences amounted to much more than that, with deeper insights into the importance of love and companionship, universal human experience and of never giving up.

Irwin and Kiparsky weren't novice hikers the day they disappeared. The couple has trekked many places over the years, and they were acquainted with the area around their vacation retreat in Seahaven/Inverness, they said. Irwin was an experienced backpacker, spending weeks at a time in the Sierra Nevada.

Having arrived earlier in the

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Rising cases, new limits

State to go into more serious regional stay-in-place order in next days

by Sue Dremann, Elena Kadvany and Kevin Forestieri

In an attempt to prevent a crisis in hospitals and intensive care units in the coming weeks due to ballooning cases of COVID-19, California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Thursday announced a regional stay-at-home order for most areas of the state, including in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties.

The state's regional stay-at-home order, which could begin in days or weeks depending on the region, affects areas where the intensive-care unit capacity in hospitals is below 15%. The state is projecting five regions that will be below that level by mid to late December. The first could reach that level in the next day or two, he said. Overall, the order would affect an estimated 40 million people.

Currently, hospital beds statewide are at 86% of capacity and ICU beds are at 67% of capacity, he said. Greater Sacramento, northern California, San Joaquin Valley and southern California regions are projected to drop below the 15% capacity ICU-bed threshold in early December; the Bay Area region is projected to reach that level by mid- to late December, Newsom said.

Santa Clara County's COVID-19 dashboard states that the seven-day rolling average of ICU beds with COVID-19 patients is only 22%. The overall occupancy of ICU beds, when including all patients, is 84% in the non-southern part of the county and is even more limited in the south county, including in Morgan Hill, Gilroy and eastern San Jose, according to health officials.

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Found

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week, they set out on a narrow trail near their cottage to find a commanding view of their surroundings, including Tomales Bay.

"We thought it would be lovely to see the sunset and come back and have dinner," Irwin recalled.

As the sun descended in the sky, they worked their way back toward the cottage. Seemingly in an instant, the beauty and grace of the setting sun fell away into a black, moonless void. Coastal mist enveloped them.

They became disoriented. They were walking the trail "by Braille," Irwin recalled, tapping their feet on the ground to figure out what was the trail and what was off-trail. "I tripped and fell and I banged my head and broke my glasses," he said.

Irwin balanced the cockeyed pieces on the bridge of his nose. He had blood dripping from a gash on his forehead, and later he found blood had dripped down his glasses that had obscured his vision, he said.

'(The helicopter) flew right over us. We waved and screamed constantly.'

—Ian Irwin

The trail was covered in thick vegetation along many stretches. With Irwin injured and the dark upon them, they realized they could not travel farther. They decided to spend the night where they were.



The Marin County Sheriff's Department Dive Team heads out to search the waters of Tomales Bay in Inverness on Feb. 19. After failing to find the Palo Alto couple over five days, authorities began to fear the worst.

Normally on hikes, they carry a small pack with essential supplies, but they were only on a brief stroll.

"We had nothing with us. No phone, no light, no water, nothing," Irwin said.

"Not even a candy bar," Kiparsky added.

They were also dressed for a short evening outing. She wore corduroy pants, a favorite sweatshirt with a jacket on top, a hat and comfortable shoes; Irwin had a light down sweater jacket, flannel shirt, corduroy pants with a small tear in one leg and hiking boots.

Alone in the cold and darkness, they piled up ferns on which to rest their heads. That night would be the first of many without much

sleep. With temperatures in the low- to mid-30s, the nights were "bone-chilling," Irwin said. They huddled as best as they could to keep each other warm.

"We would take turns to warm each other up," Irwin added. As they tossed and turned through the night, they alternated holding the other's back for warmth.

By 10 a.m., the sun was high enough and the shadows had receded so they could warm up and catch a little sleep. The first day, they were high on the hillside and could hear cars and voices. If they followed the sounds, they would find their way out, they thought.

"I could see Tomales Bay in the distance. The trails are narrow here and tend to come and go, so we wandered most of that morning. We thought if you can navigate downhill we would get to Tomales Bay and to civilization. It was really hard going. We were beating through dense, dense underbrush," Irwin said.

He threw himself backward over the dense vegetation to flatten it with his back so they could walk on top.

"It was very slow progress. Imagine it was really big and dense like a Brillo pad and you are in the middle of it," Kiparsky said. "It's kind of hard to find your way through. And in any direction you go, there's more Brillo."

In many places, they would fall through the vegetation, which had grown over a creek about five or six feet beneath, soaking their feet and legs. But they could not drink the water; it smelled of sewage. They decided they wouldn't take a chance. Getting sick on top of being lost was unthinkable, Irwin said.

Hope came in the form of a few distant summer homes, but these were closed up, uninhabited for the winter, they soon realized, with no one inside to see or hear them.

"By day two we did a lot of screaming," Irwin said, trying to attract attention.

At first, they weren't frightened. The couple has done much

backpacking. They felt comfortable in the woods, Kiparsky said. Kiparsky remembered hunting for fiddleheads, the spiral, young fronds of Ostrich ferns not yet unfurled that people would pick and eat on the East Coast where she grew up. The tops would usually be sauteed in olive oil and garlic. The couple sustained themselves on uncooked fiddleheads and a few other recognizable edible plants, she said. The fiddleheads are low in calories — only 34 calories per about 100 grams — but they are high in antioxidants, vitamins A and C and essential fatty acids. But they had nothing to drink.

By day four, they became delusional from the lack of water.

"We saw imaginary people. At one point Carol thought we were in the bedroom. All we had to do was go to the closet and get a blanket to keep warm," Irwin said.

Her delusions became teacherous at times. She didn't recognize

'It was very slow progress. Imagine it was really big and dense like a Brillo pad and you are in the middle of it.'

—Carol Kiparsky

her own jacket and took it off, thinking it belonged to someone else; she left a shoe behind that came off in the mud, then saw no need to keep the other.

One saving grace: As the couple drifted in and out of confused states of mind, at least they did it at separate times, they said.

"There was always someone with an ounce of sanity," Kiparsky said.

Irwin said that, just like the spots one sees floating in one's field of vision, thoughts of people he knew passed by, and being alone for so long gave him the chance to remember them more deeply.

"It was an opportunity to think of everyone I've ever known," he

said. "I wondered if something did happen to us if they would find out about it and how that would affect them."

"There were all kinds of moments in the day," Kiparsky said. "Definitely, we thought we might die. We thought about grandchildren and children and other people and my cat and I thought, 'There's no way I'm ready to leave these beings. So I'm sorry, I'm not dying.'"

Thoughts of death didn't consume them, though, Irwin said. Their goal was to keep moving and not to give up. And they knew the key was having each other.

"Being close was indispensable," Kiparsky said. "I think I would've not gotten out of there if I had been there by myself."

Because Irwin was injured, at one point she tore pieces of a silk scarf and tied them onto trees so that Irwin could follow her to the next clearing, but even at 20 feet away they couldn't see each other. Although she lost her shoes, Kiparsky's feet were in better shape than Irwin's. Irwin, with boots and wet socks, developed foot problems from the lack of circulation — sort of like trench foot that soldiers developed during World War I, he said. He was afraid to take his shoes off to look at blisters.

When end-of-life thoughts did creep in, they managed them with humor at times.

"At one point we had been talking about planning our estate and the possibility of doing — instead of ... being incinerated or buried — that we would want to be compost. And we were sitting there amid piles of vegetation and everything, and he says, 'You know about that compost burial? We might be accomplishing it right now,'" Kiparsky said.

After the fourth day without water, they resolved they had to drink whatever they could. If not, they knew they would die. They found small seeps — puddles created by water oozing up through the ground — and places where a deer might have put their hoof print. The water there didn't smell like a septic system. They tried to absorb the water with a sock, squeezing handfuls into their mouths. Sometimes, they laid down and sipped from the small puddles, they said. The water seeps contained bioluminescent fungi. At night, sticks around the water margins would glow in the dark, Irwin said.

They always had the expectation they would be rescued. At nights, a helicopter flew overhead. Irwin could see its green and red lights. He took off his shirt, hoping his skin would give off a heat signature detectable by infrared sensors.

"It flew right over us. We waved and screamed constantly," he said.

Sometimes they sang songs to lift their spirits. Old favorites turned into ballads about their



The Marin County Sheriff's Department Dive Team preps diving gear at the Inverness Yacht Club in Inverness on Feb. 19.

WATCH MORE ONLINE
PaloAltoOnline.com

Excerpts from Sue Dremann's video interview with Carol Kiparsky and Ian Irwin can be viewed at facebook.com/paloaltoonline.

circumstances, such as songs about drinking muddy water, they said.

By Day 9, however, they were beginning to feel they might truly die. The couple was hesitant to leave the water holes.

"We were pretty spent" by then, Irwin said.

But on the morning of Feb. 22, their ninth day in the wilderness, they heard faint voices. The couple called out.

"It seemed to be a call and response," Irwin said.

"Definitely, we thought we might die. We thought about our children and our grandchildren, and I thought, "There's no way I'm ready to leave these beings."

—Carol Kiparsky

On the other end were Marin Search and Rescue volunteer Quincy Webster, California Rescue Dog Association volunteer Rich Cassens and Groot, a golden retriever.

Kiparsky and Irwin had been found, about 4 miles from the cottage where they'd started their sunset hike.

Cassens said they would send the dog down to the couple. The brush was too dense to get through.

"I asked, 'Is that a cadaver dog or a person dog?'" Irwin recalled. "He said, 'He does both.'"

The friendly, 3-year-old Groot made his way to them, but it took another 40 minutes for Quincy and Cassens to reach them after cutting through the thick vegetation. They had fresh water, Gatorade and warm clothing.

A helicopter arrived with a litter on which to carry Kiparsky and Irwin out. Irwin broke into song as he was hoisted into the sky, singing "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," he recalled. As he swung out over the forest, he felt a kinship with all of history: with all of the people who had been lost or traveled through forests before them; of the Coast Miwok who inhabited these lands and all of the slaves who had escaped through forests in the South and into an uncertain and often

hostile environment.

"Think about all of the people who endured that for one reason or another," he said.

Kiparsky, who is terrified of heights, said she shivered as the litter carried her into the sky. But her fear was eased. They had made it out alive.

"I looked around and saw the world," she said.

Just as they had been inseparable for nine days, they remained together as they healed. Placed in the ambulance together, they stayed in the same intensive-care unit in Marin General Hospital.

Both were hypothermic, with body temperatures of about 94 degrees Fahrenheit. Of the two, Irwin was injured the worst due to hitting his head and with his feet nerve-damaged from being cold and wet in his boots and with poor circulation. Kiparsky mainly had scratched feet, she said.

The couple is immensely grateful for the outpouring of support they have received from all over the world and for their neighbors, who brought them food once they returned home. But don't ask them to talk about their "ordeal," they said.

"It was a much more mixed experience than that," Irwin said. There was "good conversation, good company and some beauties of nature."

The experience was also transformative: "The commonality of all humanity, even across time and even across individual experiences. We share an awful lot across time, history and as a nation," Irwin said.

Kiparsky said she was most struck by "truly being present. Really present and immersed, even for a moment, was something I learned out there."

Kiparsky and Irwin now savor each taste of food, each encounter with a person, the sound of music — and nature. Looking out at the finches at their backyard bird feeder, Kiparsky said, "Before, it was a fleeting, 'Oh, we've got birds. Isn't that nice?'"

But now, "There's so much more capacity to know who's who and how many different kinds they are and their behaviors and seeing them from different angles," she said.

There are flashbacks. During a visit to a garden store in

Redwood City, Irwin came across benches made out of twisted willow branches. It brought back unpleasant memories of the thicket of brambles, he said.

The couple has been doing much writing about their experiences since returning home.

"We're definitely processing," Kiparsky said of their time in the wilderness, which is still vivid to her. "I feel there's a lot to be learned from it. ... When I stop and think about it, things come up."

They also haven't shied from

revisiting the place where they became lost. In August, they went back to those woods to find where they had started. They were accompanied by two of their rescuers, and they shared all of the events, including what was involved in their rescue.

About 1,400 or 1,500 people get lost in national parks each year, Irwin said he has heard.

Looking back on their experience, Irwin said when taking even a short walk in the wilderness now,

he will take a cell phone, as much as he dislikes mobile devices.

Kiparsky said that what stands out to her most is a new perspective: "You are just more aware of being alive. Alive." ■

Staff Writer Sue Dremann can be emailed at sdremann@paweweekly.com.

About the cover: Sitting in the backyard of their Palo Alto home, Ian Irwin and Carol Kiparsky look back on the nine days in February when they went missing in the wilderness. Photo by Magali Gauthier. Design by Douglas Young.

"I asked, "Is that a cadaver dog or a person dog?" He said, "He does both."

—Ian Irwin



Palo Alto Unified School District

Notice is hereby Given that proposals will be received by the Palo Alto Unified School District for bid package:

Contract Name: PALO ALTO H.S. HW-CW PIPE REPLACEMENT PROJECT

Contract No. PAHWCW- 100

DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK: The work includes, but is not limited to: Excavation and removal of existing asphalt and concrete pavement, landscaping and underground Hot Water and Chilled Water (HW-CW) pipes and control valves to be replaced with new pipes, materials, surfaces, and landscaping throughout the campus. Provide traffic control, safety and security barriers along the Campus walkways, re-routing pedestrian foot traffic safely around each Work Zone.

REVISED DATES: There will be a **MANDATORY** pre-bid conference and site visit at **10:00 AM Tuesday, December 15, 2020** and alternate date **10 AM Friday, December 18, 2020** at the **Visitors Parking lot of Tower Administration Building, 50 Embarcadero Road, Palo Alto, California, 94301**. Proper PPE attire required, including Masks and Gloves.

Please register and respond with your date preference via e-mail to rinaldo@fs3h.com

Electronic Bid Submission: Proposals must be received at the District Facilities Office **via e-mail, by 4:00 PM Tuesday, January 12, 2021**. Send your **Bid in PDF format to vmelero@pausd.org**.

To bid on this Project, the Bidder is required to possess one or more of the following State of California contractors' license(s): **A, C-4, C-34, or C-36** In addition, the Bidder is required to be registered as a public works contractor with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to the Labor Code. Pursuant to Public Contract Code §20111.6, only prequalified bidders will be eligible to submit a bid. Any bid submitted by a bidder who is not prequalified shall be non-responsive. Moreover, any bid listing subcontractors holding C-7, C-10, C-16, C-20, C-36, C-38, or C-43 licenses who have not been prequalified, shall be deemed nonresponsive.

Bonding required for this project is as follows: Bid Bond 10% of the total bid, Performance Bond to be 100%, Payment Bond is to be 100%.

The Architectural Firm for this project is: **HED Architects, 417 Montgomery St., Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94108. Contact: Chris Ramm**

PREVAILING WAGE LAWS: The successful Bidder and all subcontractors shall pay all workers for all Work performed pursuant to this Contract not less than the general prevailing rate of per diem wages and the general prevailing rate for holiday and overtime work as determined by the Director of the Department of Industrial Relations, State of California, for the type of work performed and the locality in which the work is to be performed within the boundaries of the District, pursuant to section 1770 et seq. of the California Labor Code. Prevailing wage rates are also available on the Internet at: <http://www.dir.ca.gov>. This Project is subject to labor compliance monitoring and enforcement by the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1771.4 and subject to the requirements of Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations. The Contractor and all Subcontractors under the Contractor shall furnish electronic certified payroll records directly to the Labor Commissioner weekly and within ten (10) days of any request by the District or the Labor Commissioner. The successful Bidder shall comply with all requirements of Division 2, Part 7, Chapter 1, Articles 1-5 of the Labor Code.

Bidders may examine Bidding Documents on line at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/14yGic7MnLcv94ZcscCFG7bd_Csu40k0?usp=sharing

Bidders may also purchase copies of the plans and specifications at **ARC Document Solutions 829 Cherry Lane San Carlos, CA 94070, Phone Number (650) 631-2310**

The District shall award the Contract, if it awards it at all, to the lowest responsive responsible bidder based on the base bid amount only.

The Board reserves the right to reject any and all bids and/or waive any irregularity in any bid received. If the District awards the Contract, the security of unsuccessful bidder(s) shall be returned within sixty (60) days from the time the award is made. Unless otherwise required by law, no bidder may withdraw its bid for ninety (90) days after the date of the bid opening.

All questions can be addressed to: Palo Alto Unified School District
25 Churchill Avenue, Building D, Palo Alto, CA94306-1099
Attn: Rinaldo Veseliza, Sr. PM
Fax: (650) 327-3588, Phone: (650) 808-7946
rinaldo@fs3h.com



California Rescue Dog Association volunteer Rich Cassens, far left, and Groot, his 3-year-old golden retriever, and Marin County Search and Rescue volunteer Quincy Webster, center, found Palo Alto residents Carol Kiparsky and Ian Irwin in Marin County on Feb. 22.