

THE ARK



inside

ACCIDENT LEADS TO CAR FIRE THAT SPREADS TO TIBURON HOME

Page 8

TIBURON DOLES OUT FUNDING FOR BROADBAND PLAN, REC AGENCY

Page 10

GET READY FOR MORE TRAFFIC FROM SCHOOL, CONSTRUCTION

Page 5

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Four-way race set for Tiburon council seat



Kathleen Defever



Noah Griffin



Brian McCullough



Nora Noguez

Three members of town boards and a repeat challenger will square off in Nov. 2 special election

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

Two additional candidates are now officially running to fill the vacant seat on the Tiburon Town Council, making for a four-way race on

the Nov. 2 special-election ballot.

Diversity Inclusion Task Force member Noah Griffin filed his candidacy papers Aug. 4, and Brian McCullough filed the following day,

See **ELECTION, PAGE 17**

Tiburon council balks at new trash rate hike

Officials push off vote as they question fees, contract

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

The Tiburon Town Council has put off approving an increase to trash and recycling prices for residents, with councilmembers questioning why Mill Valley Refuse Service's rates in Tiburon are higher than the other jurisdictions it serves and once again calling for the town to put its garbage contract out to bid.

The Town Council reached an impasse with a split 2-2 vote over the 2.49-percent rate increase request from Mill Valley Refuse at its Aug. 4 meeting; the council currently has one vacancy.

As a result, councilmembers voted 4-0 to continue discussion of the increase to the board's Aug.

See **TRASH, PAGE 20**

Golden Gate hum vexes residents

Officials say they're close to fixing the noise, caused by high winds through a railing installed in 2020 retrofit



By **GRETCHEN LANG**
glang@thearknewspaper.com

Two weeks ago, Chelsea Schlunt was having trouble sleeping.

A weird, high-pitched humming filled the air outside her Belvedere

Island home. It grew loud, then faded, then grew loud again. She tried closing the windows and even putting a pillow over her head, but she couldn't shut out the sound.

See **BRIDGE, PAGE 20**

Golden Gate Bridge officials and engineers say they're working on a solution for the high-frequency hum during high winds.

ELLIOT KARLAN ARCHIVE

Marin schools require vaccine status

Students 12 and older must disclose, while staff must be inoculated or tested weekly

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

Staff and students ages 12 and older in the Reed Union School District will be required to verify their COVID-19 vaccination status when they return to campuses next week.

Under updated guidelines from Marin County Public Health, staff at all county schools must submit proof of vaccination or undergo weekly coronavirus testing. Students who are eligible to receive the vaccine — those over age 12 — must also disclose their vaccination status, but unvaccinated

See **PANDEMIC, PAGE 19**

Tiburon 6 | Sports 12 | Belvedere 12 | Police Logs 16 | In Memoriam 18 | ArkBeat 23 | Classifieds 25

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Trash, *continued from page 1*

18 meeting.

Under the requested increase, which would be paid by customers over a nine-month period starting Oct. 1, residents with one 32-gallon garbage can who live in a flat neighborhood will see their quarterly bill increase to \$156.42 from \$151.38. A 32-gallon-can customer who lives on a hillside will see their rate rise to \$186.24 from \$180.27.

Those in flat areas with one 20-gallon garbage can will see a quarterly increase to \$138.66 from \$134.19, while 20-gallon customers in hill areas will see an increase to \$164.19, up from \$158.91.

The 2.49-percent increase is lower than the increase suggested by R3 Consulting Group, an independent consulting firm hired to periodically evaluate the refuse service's increase requests across its nine jurisdictions.

The firm's review of Mill Valley Refuse's 2021-2022 rate application for Tiburon identified a number of errors in the company's methodology, including one that overstated income from multiple-can customers, which resulted in a revised suggested rate increase of 3.4 percent.

However, Mill Valley Refuse said it would

council notes

In other action at the Tiburon Town Council's Aug. 4 meeting, councilmembers approved several other items as part of its consent calendar for bulk approval of noncontroversial items. All votes were 4-0; the council currently has one vacancy.

- **Cost-of-living raises:** The town of Tiburon's management and nonunion employees will get a 2.5-percent raise this year as part of an update to the town's employee recognition and incentive compensation programs.

Management includes all Town Hall department heads, while nonunion employees include all Town Hall employees not in management positions and some Police Department employees, including the department's emergency services coordinator, who are not covered by the police union.

The raises will cost the town another \$84,139 per year, including the corresponding impact to benefits.

- **New labor contract:** The council approved a new three-year labor contract for employees who are members of the Service Employees International Union, mostly public works crewmembers.

Under the new agreement, the employees will get 2 percent raises in this and the next fiscal year, followed by a 2.5 percent increase in fiscal 2024.

The agreement provides for the first time a \$100

honor the original 2.49-percent increase.

Waste-collection rates are set to provide a fair return — 10-percent profit on allowable costs — to Mill Valley Refuse. The company

monthly contribution to a Retirement Health Saving Account for some union employees.

Rates for public-works crewmembers who are assigned on-call duty during the winter — when storms create situations that require rapid response — were increased for the first time since 2013, to \$380 per month from \$300 per month.

The town also now will provide up to 10 days of emergency paid leave for crewmembers whose normal worksite or operation is closed due to an emergency, when the town can't reassign the employee to another worksite that is not impacted.

The total fiscal impact of the union contract is \$49,583 and has already been factored into town's fiscal 2022 budget.

- **Housing First:** The council authorized Town Manager Greg Chanis to enter into an agreement with the county of Marin to contribute \$40,269 to the Housing First intensive case-management program for assistance to the homeless, which pairs support services with Section 8 housing subsidies to get homeless people off the streets permanently. The money will come from the unrestricted reserve fund of the town's American Rescue Plan coronavirus federal relief aid. The Belvedere City Council was expected to approve its own contribution of \$9,310 to the program at its Aug. 9 meeting.

can file a rate-increase application when it believes its current rates will not provide that fair return; it must file those requests simultaneously in all of its jurisdictions.

- **Hotel revenue tax:** Tiburon will continue to levy a 2-percent tax on gross hotel revenue to fund the Tiburon Tourism Business Improvement District, which aims to promote the area to visitors.

Tiburon uses the assessments, which are paid by the town's two hotels, Waters Edge Hotel at 25 Main St. and The Lodge at Tiburon at 1651 Tiburon Blvd., to pay for marketing to promote Tiburon as a destination for vacations, conferences, meetings and other events. The business improvement district's chief program is nonprofit Destination Tiburon, which promotes overnight tourism.

- **Cypress Hollow assessment:** The council approved levying annual \$378-per-household fee to maintain park, lighting fixtures and other landscaping in the Cypress Hollow Landscape and Lighting District.

Cypress Hollow is a subdivision built in late 1980s in what was then unincorporated Marin, outside the town's jurisdiction. It lies north and east of the Tiburon Boulevard-Bayview Terrace intersection.

As a condition of approval, the county required the developer to create a public park and established the assessment district so that future homeowners would be financially responsible for maintaining the light poles and park.

In the two years following an approved rate increase, the company can further

See **TRASH, NEXT PAGE**

Pandemic, *from page 19*

it's recommended unvaccinated students quarantine for seven days after returning home and get tested on day five. Vaccinated students should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days; getting tested three to five days after returning is recommended for vaccinated students who have traveled internationally.

Santora said it's critical that staff and students stay home whenever they feel sick or are exhibiting potential symptoms of the virus.

"If this could be bolded and in red, this would be my favorite, most important guidance," Santora said. "The outbreaks that we've seen this summer, the clusters that we've seen, typically start with someone who was sick going to the activity that they should not go to."

She pointed out some 94 percent of Marin residents have received at least one dose of the vaccine and nearly 87 percent are fully vaccinated. She encouraged school staff, parents and students to get vaccinated if they're eligible to do so.

"We're in a different space than we were," Santora said. "Vaccinations work, but Delta is so contagious, so we need to work with populations that are unvaccinated to stop the spread of the Delta variant in our community."

Reach Assistant Editor Emily Lavin, The Ark's youth and Strawberry reporter, at 415-944-3841.

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Bridge, *continued from page 1*

"What is that noise?" she recalled asking her husband. It sounded like a blown transformer.

"Oh, that's the Golden Gate Bridge," he replied.

Schlunt and her husband are just the latest residents on the Tiburon Peninsula and around the greater Bay Area kept awake on windy nights; from Belvedere and Tiburon to Daly City to San Francisco's Marina District to Tennessee Valley, residents have been bedeviled by a weird humming sound emanating from the Golden Gate Bridge. The Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District said it has received hundreds of complaints over the past year since completing a wind resistance retrofit of the suspension bridge.

District engineers have been working on the problem for more than a year. A district spokesman said they have found a solution but declined to offer additional details about the potential fix.

"We know this issue is of great importance to our neighbors," said Paolo Cosulich-Schwartz, public affairs manager for the district. "We'll have more details to share about the solution in the coming months."

On the Tiburon Peninsula, residents from the Belvedere Lagoon to the Tiburon hills have reported hearing the high-pitched whine, especially in the quiet hours of the night, with several taking to online neighborhood forum Nextdoor.com to air their complaints.

"It's awful! I can't sleep!" Carol Michelson of Round Hill posted on the site in May. "What were they thinking?"

"I turn on sleep music to try to drown it out," said Tiburon resident Kirsten Siewert. "It's very bothering."

In an interview, Belvedere resident Mona Murphy said she can hear the noise "clearly day and night."

"I thought of asking on Nextdoor if anyone was keeping a flying saucer in their backyard," she said.

Bridge walkers first noticed the

high-frequency humming in June 2020. Residents posting on social-media sites said it sounded like the soundtrack to a horror film or "aliens." Local radio station KQED joked the bridge had effectively become a "giant orange wheezing kazoo."

The sound, Cosulich-Schwartz said, stems from a new west sidewalk bridge railing, part of a \$12-million retrofit designed to ensure the structural integrity of the bridge in high winds. It has nothing to do with the suicide-prevention net currently being installed.

The bridge has been retrofitted against high wind torsion a number of times in its history, according to the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District website.

During a storm on Dec. 1, 1951, 89 mph winds caused the bridge to twist and vibrate, resulting in minor damage. After that, engineers constructed new bracing across the bottom of the roadbed connecting the two steel trusses that support the roadway to make the bridge stiffer.

The latest retrofit allows the bridge to sustain winds of up to 100 mph in anticipation of climate change and more intense storms, Cosulich-Schwartz said. Engineers replaced the old walkway railing with one using thinner vertical slats designed to allow more air to flow through it. It soon became apparent, however, that when the wind blows from the northwest through the slats at a certain angle and speed the bridge "sings."

Residents from the Marina District in San Francisco to as far south as Daly City say they hear the hum on windy days. Hikers report hearing it from the hills above Tennessee Valley. Walkers and bicyclists on the bridge say it can be deafening.

The Golden Gate Bridge district is paying the firm that originally installed the fencing, Canada-based RWDI, \$260,218 to fix the problem.

Working together with district engineers, RWDI began conducting wind-tunnel testing of a full-scale model of the railing in a laboratory outside of Toronto last fall. Engineers were able to recreate the noise in a controlled environment and began testing

several measures and materials that could be used to dampen or eliminate sound without compromising the aerodynamics of the bridge, the district said in a press release.

"We are pleased to report that we have identified a promising solution that could diminish or eliminate the sound," it announced.

That solution is still being tested to determine whether it's suitable for the harsh weather conditions of the Golden Gate. Cosulich-Schwartz said he could offer no further details about the solution, its likely cost or when it will be installed, saying only that more information will be forthcoming in the fall. The fix will not require an increase in bridge tolls, he said.

Local residents think the noise has gone on long enough.

"You can't have a lot of noise like that," Schlunt said. "If you are awake at night, it's distracting."

"There's no way that I will accept a noise like that indefinitely," Siewert agreed. "That's not why we bought homes in this area."

Some residents, however, say they find the noise intriguing, even romantic.

Architect Miles Berger, a former Tiburon mayor, said he finds the hum a welcome part of the "acoustic landscape" outside his Old Tiburon home.

"The bridge hum is one of the good noises," he said. "It reminds me of the wonderful place we live."

For the time being, Tiburon Peninsula residents are learning to cope using white-noise machines and sleep aids to try to drown out the sound.

Murphy said she recently purchased a pair of high-end ear buds and is keeping her sense of humor.

"It was really loud last week," she said. "I was going to suggest that they tune it to play 'I Left My Heart in San Francisco.'"

Contributing writer Gretchen Lang of Belvedere covers the environment. She spent 15 years abroad writing for newspapers including the Boston Globe and the International Herald Tribune.