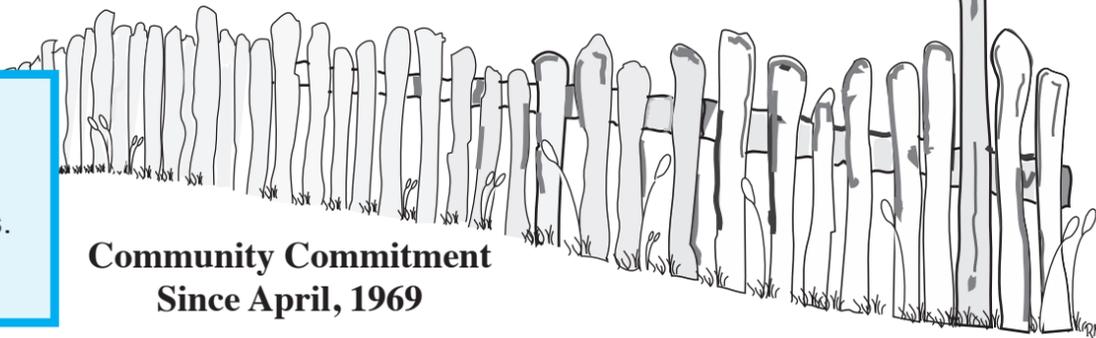
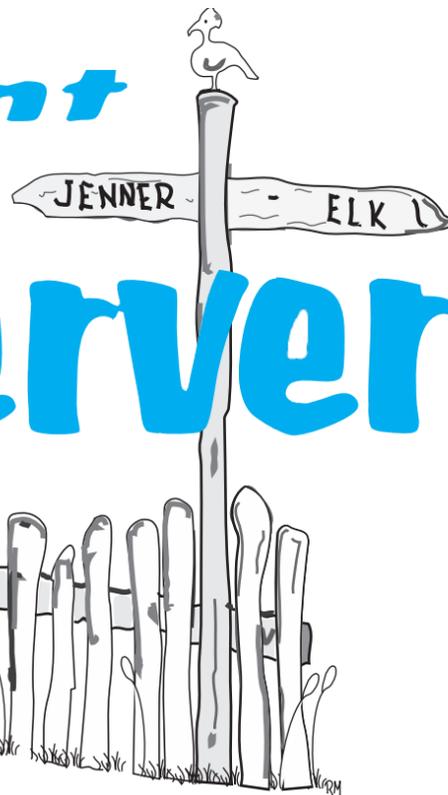


Independent

Coast Observer



Spring forward!

At 2 a.m. Sunday morning, Daylight Saving Time begins. Set clocks **AHEAD** one hour before retiring.

Community Commitment
Since April, 1969

VOLUME 48, NUMBER 50

ONE SECTION

GUALALA, CALIFORNIA

PRICE \$1.63+TAX

MARCH 10, 2017



Assemblymember Jim Wood fields a question from a local constituent at Saturday's town hall meeting at the Gualala Community Center. Photo by Drew Fagan.

Assemblymember speaks to standing room only crowd in Gualala

By Chris McManus

news@mendonoma.com

It was literally standing room only Saturday at the Gualala Community Center when Assemblymember Jim Wood held a wide-ranging town hall meeting with about 200 of his 2nd Assembly District constituents.

Sonoma County

Marijuana business tax a go

By S. J. Black

news@mendonoma.com

Sonoma County voters approved a cannabis business tax with a sweeping majority in a special election held Tuesday, March 7.

More than 56,000 voters were in favor of the measure, accounting for 72.4 percent of the vote.

The proposed tax asked voters to allow the county to tax unincorporated marijuana corporations both medical and non-medical within Sonoma County, paying up to \$38 per square foot on cultivation annually or 10 percent of cannabis business gross receipts.

"I think the people

The 2nd District, comprised of northern Sonoma County, and Mendocino, Humboldt, Trinity and Del Norte counties, is the biggest represented by a Democrat, with more state parks and more of the coastline than any other district. And although for the first time in 20

years every county in the district voted for a **See Wood...**

against it were very verbal," said Board Chairwoman Shirlee Zane in an article in the Wednesday, March 8, issue of The Press Democrat. "But the general feeling of voters was yes, it's time we tax the marijuana industry. Even if it might be painful, it's a pathway to compliance and legitimacy."

The Sonoma County Growers Alliance was known to oppose the bill, citing its high tax maximum as an issue for cultivators, suggesting they might decide to plant elsewhere. SCGA also worried for potential cannabis business owners.

See Measure A...

Continued on Page 13

years every county in the district voted for a **See Wood...**

Continued on Page 29

Gualala businesses linked to AT&T's highway fiber cable

By J. Stephen McLaughlin

news@mendonoma.com

Gualala is finally getting a digital "on-ramp" to the AT&T fiber optic cable that was buried under Highway 1 decades ago.

SkyFiberInternet connected its high-capacity fiber link to Empire Contracting's Sea Watch building this week, according to owner David Hillmer. Carrier Coordinator David Peissner said all the tenants would have access to the broadband connection.

Duncan McCoy of Anchor Bay Associates told the ICO he anticipates connecting all his Anchor Bay Village commercial tenants to the high speed SkyFiber system. "Everyone's excited" about getting the no-limit service, he said, adding, "I think it will

Icy Highway 1 crash takes life of local contractor

By David Torres

On Sunday night, March 5, Beth and Dennis Kirwan of Little River were headed home, northbound on Highway 1, pulling a U-Haul trailer loaded with newly purchased furniture when they rounded a corner just south of Navarro Ridge Road and slid over ice from a hail storm.

The driver, Dennis Kirwan, lost control of his 2000 Ford pickup and slid in a westerly direction off the roadway. The pick-up and trailer traveled down the west shoulder em-



In happier days Beth and Dennis Kirwan enjoyed flying together. Dennis Kirwan was killed in an automobile accident on Sunday night. Photo courtesy of the Kirwan family.

bankment and collided with a tree. Kirwan was pronounced dead at the scene. "The truck just kept sliding forward

and into the other lane and off the road, down an embankment and

See Kirwan...
Continued on Page 8

Forum explores Point Arena's housing needs

By Lindsey J. Smith

news@mendonoma.com

A dozen people gathered at Point Arena City Hall on Tuesday evening for a housing forum led by a team of graduate students from the University of California, Berkeley.

Point Arena City Manager Richard Shoemaker enlisted the help of Lauren Alexander, Anna Duning and Evan Larson, three graduate students in public policy, to analyze the city's housing policy. The students, who are working for free as part of a class project, had been talking with City staff for several weeks to learn about Point Arena's housing element and needs.

With affordable rentals in shorter and shorter supply up and down the Mendonoma Coast,

the issue of housing has been top-of-mind for locals, employers, schools and the City Council. All of the candidates who ran in last year's City Council election named it as a priority and there's been discussion in public and at Council meetings of a possible development proposed by David Hillmer of Empire Contracting.

"We really just want to hear about like what your vision is for Point Arena and what values that reflects," Alexander said at the start of the meeting.

To get the discussion rolling, Shoemaker urged those present to think broadly about what housing in Point Arena could look like, while the students lis-

See Housing...
Continued on Page 26

Gualala Rotary

Scholarships available to high school seniors

Gualala Rotary is offering two scholarships that will each provide the recipient \$3,000 a year for two years to graduating seniors who will continue their education in the fall. Applications are due March 17 and are available at Point Arena High School, South Coast High School, and Pacific Community Charter School or from the Rotary Scholarship Coordinator at richardhughes@sbcglobal.net. The funds can be used for college or for a trade school.

Currently six high school graduates are in college supported by Gualala Rotary scholar-

ships. The main fundraiser for these scholarships is the Taste of the North Coast dinner held in the fall each year.

Students will be expected to take sufficient credit hours and maintain adequate grade point averages to qualify for next semester funding.

The applications must be filled out completely by the applicant and returned together with required documents to Rich Hughes at richardhughes@sbcglobal.net.

Applications will be screened and top students will be interviewed between March 20 and April 15.

Sea Ranch Fire Department offers scholarships

Applications for The Sea Ranch Volunteer Fire Department's annual scholarship program are now being accepted for the 2017-2018 school year. Initiated in 2001 to honor founding Fire Chief Dan Levin, the program is funded by the Department's annual Christmas tree sale. There were no applications received in 2016.

Candidates must be local graduating seniors who have been accepted to or are currently enrolled in a junior/community college, a four-year institution or an

appropriate vocational school. Priority will be given to students who will be enrolled in a fire or emergency medical science curriculum.

For further information and the application packet, please contact Walt Jorgenson at 707-357-0931 or waltj@mcn.org. The application must be completed and returned via email to waltj@mcn.org or via snail mail to The Sea Ranch Volunteer Fire Department, Attn Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 65, The Sea Ranch, CA, 95497 by Saturday, April 29.

Fiber... from Page 1

ber's Nevada crews.

The cost of SkyFiberInternet service in Gualala varies with capacity required, and Peissner said customers can purchase more bandwidth short-term on an as-needed basis, such as high-traffic holiday weekends for lodging or real estate clients.

According to SkyFiberInternet's rate sheet, its commercial-grade internet has no data

caps, and starts at \$196 monthly for 30 megabits per second download/10 Mbps upload (with \$399 installation) to \$500 monthly for 50/50 Mbps (\$499 installation).

The other Internet Service Provider in Gualala, Cal-Neva Broadband, offers commercial customers 25/3 Mbps for \$109 per month (with a 300 Gb per month data cap) and 30/5 Mbps for \$199.99 per month with no data cap, according to its website.

Mendocino County losing director of planning and building

Steve Dunicliff will leave his role as the Director of Planning and Building Services for Mendocino County and return to the Mendocino County Executive Office as Deputy Chief Executive Officer. Dunicliff will return to the Executive Office on Monday, April 3.

Dunicliff began his County career in 2008, after working in the construction and real estate industries. He previously held the positions of Economic Development Coordinator, Deputy CEO, and Planning and Building Director. Chief Executive Officer Carmel J. Angelo said, "Steve has done a tremendous job as Director, and he assembled a strong management team in the department. They are well positioned to build upon the foundation established by Steve."

Dunicliff will begin managing the County's Facilities and Fleet Di-

visions and working on several sustainable energy initiatives, among a variety of other tasks and assignments.

While at Planning and Building Services, he implemented "Quick-Check" permit processing and created an online portal which currently allows the public to view permit processing activity and will soon allow for certain permits to be issued online at build.mendocino.org.

A nationwide recruitment for a Director of Planning and Building Services will be initiated immediately, and former Planning and Building Services Director Nash Gonzalez will assume the role of Interim Planning and Building Services Director. Gonzalez served as the Planning and Building Services Director for the County from 2008 to 2011, and as the Director of Planning and Development for the County of Santa Clara from 2012 to 2015.

Audubon Society to present multi-media program on owls

Award winning photographer Paul Bannick will present a program featuring video, sound, stories from the field and several dozen new images from his brand new-book "Owl: A Year in the Lives of North American Owls" on Wednesday, March 15, 7 p.m. at the Gualala Community Center.

Bannick uses intimate yet dramatic images to follow owls through the course of one year in their distinct habitats. He will show images of courtship, mating, and nesting in spring; fledging and feeding of the young in summer; dispersal and gaining independence in fall, and winter's migrations and competitions for food.

His presentation will show how owls use the unique resources available to them in each habitat to face those challenges. All 19 species found in Canada and the United States are featured, with a special focus on the

Northern Pygmy-Owl, Great Gray Owl, Burrowing Owl, and Snowy Owl. This Mendocino Coast Audubon Society program is open to the public.

Point Arena students to march against pipeline

By J. Stephen McLaughlin
news@mendonoma.com

Point Arena High School students have organized a march in solidarity with protesters of the Dakota Access oil pipeline for Friday, according to Dr. Melody Hood of PAHS.

The "I Stand with Standing Rock" march will begin at 9 a.m. at the school's upper parking lot near Lake Street, and proceed down Lake Street and Main Street for a rally at the Arena Theater.

The pipeline to move North Dakota oil to a shipping point in Illinois has been the subject of months of protests in North Dakota, with about 750 arrests since August. There also has been vandalism to company equipment in Iowa and North Dakota.

Lawsuits and protests have been led by the Standing Rock and

Gualala Lions to test vision, collect glasses

Members of the Gualala Lions Club will collect used eyeglasses and conduct free vision screenings here on Saturday, March 18, as part of a statewide Eyes Across California event. The Lions will be at the Gualala Community Center Pay 'n' Take mid-month sale from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. No appointment is necessary for the free vision screening, according to the club.

Donated used eyeglasses are sent to an official Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center for processing. There, the glasses are sorted to

determine those that are usable, processed, and placed in inventory for distribution to optical missions in the U.S. and around the world. Lions help to minimize landfill waste by supporting precious metal reclamation and scrap processing for damaged glasses that are unusable.

The Gualala event is part of a "Day of Action and Awareness" in California for Lions eyeglass recycling efforts, marking the Centennial Celebration of Lions International, which was founded in Chicago in 1917.

'American Pickers' looking for antiques in California

The television show "American Pickers" is planning to film episodes of the series in California in Spring 2017, and is looking for leads. People with large, private collections or accumulations of antiques that the Pickers can spend the better part of the day looking through, should send their name, phone number, location and description of the collection with photos to americanpickers@cinetflix.com or call 855-OLD-RUST.

Mike Wolfe, Frank Fritz, the pickers, put

on display the world of antique "picking" on the History Channel. The show follows Wolfe and Fritz as they hunt for America's most valuable antiques.

The pair hopes to give historically significant objects a new lease on life, while learning a thing or two about America's past along the way. They are always excited to find sizeable, unique collections and learn the interesting stories behind them.

New episodes air at 9 p.m. EST on History.

Cheyenne River Sioux, who believe the pipeline threatens water, sacred sites and their right to practice their religion. Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners, developers of the pipeline, disputes that and says the pipeline is safe.

Four days after he was inaugurated, President Trump signed executive memos reversing a December decision by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to deny an

ease for the pipeline under the lake upstream of the reservation, thus reviving the controversial project.

A federal judge declined Tuesday to temporarily stop construction of the final section of the disputed Dakota Access oil pipeline, clearing the way for oil to flow as soon as next week.

(Associated Press contributed to this story.)



Independent Coast Observer (USPS 881280)

Published weekly from 38500 S. Highway 1, Gualala, CA. Periodicals Postage Paid at Gualala, CA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Independent Coast Observer, P.O. Box 1200, Gualala, CA 95445.

Subscribe and read the ICO online now at www.mendonoma.com
Archived issues since 2012 are available online

Share the road with bicyclists and hikers