

Calistoga Tribune

Independently owned and published in Calistoga for Calistogans since 2002

50¢

Friday, January 9, 2015

- ▶ **CARRIER RETIRES**
After 30 years at post office,
Marge Fechter retires
Below
- ▶ **CURBSIDE COMMENTS**
Where do you like to
eat in Calistoga?
3
- ▶ **SUSHI MAMBO**
New restaurant opens after
earthquake forces a move
7

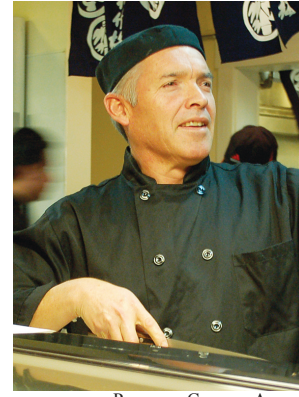


PHOTO BY CLAUDIA ACEVES

Calistoga Hills Resort sold to Hong Kong firm

■ New owners already own 35 luxury end hotels around the world

By Pat Hampton
Tribune Publisher

Calistoga Hills, a luxury hotel project approved for an 88 acre site above Foothill Boulevard, has been sold to an international development company which owns high-end hotels in several countries.

Dan Hennigan and Mike Heagin from CTF International based

in Washington, D.C. told city councilmembers Tuesday that they were “very excited about the opportunity we have here.” CTF also has offices in London and Hong Kong, he said.

Project manager Aaron Harkin will continue in his position with new owners CTF International, owned by the Hong Kong-based Cheng family. Billionaire banker

Jacqui Safra of Switzerland sold the project for an undisclosed amount to billionaire Cheng Yutung, whose companies already own 35 high-end hotels, including the 188-room Carlyle Hotel in New York City.

Last year the resort project was listed for \$100 million by Christies International Real Estate. Harkin said back then that Calistoga

Hills Resorts owners were searching for investors to partner or buy the project.

Originally named Enchanted Resorts, the project is now called Calistoga Hills to avoid a trademark fight with a Sedona, Arizona hotel named Enchantment Resort.

Under a development agreement signed in 2012, the approved project is to develop a boutique hotel consisting of up to 110 rooms grouped in 36 cottages, up to 20 residence club homes, up to

13 custom homes, and other public amenities and infrastructure, including on-site improvements expected to include lobbies, common areas, restaurants and other food and beverage concessions, various retail facilities, one or more pools and various other recreational areas and facilities, a spa, a fitness center, parking, and meeting spaces.

The project was put to Calis-

See **RESORT** page 6

SHE WALKED 8 MILES A DAY TO DELIVER MAIL



PHOTO BY PAT HAMPTON

Marge Fechter waves her retirement paperwork and returns a box of uniforms she will no longer need after retiring from the post office Dec. 31 where she worked for 30 years.

Marge puts a stamp on her 30 years as a postal carrier

By Amanda Rhodes
Tribune Staff Writer

If you live in town or have in the past 30 years, you’ve likely seen her strolling the streets with a smile.

More than likely, she’s had a hand in getting you your daily delivery of everything from ex-

citing birth and graduation announcements to that dreaded monthly water bill.

After walking nearly eight miles a day, one encounter with a pesky pooch and giving countless directions to Castello di Amo-

See **FECHTER** page 3

Housing Element approved by council

■ State law requires update every 8 years

Calistoga City Council unanimously voted to adopt the final draft 2014 Housing Element Update of the Calistoga General Plan Tuesday evening.

The housing element is a required element of the city’s general plan that includes a comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all segments of the community.

State law requires that the housing element be updated every eight years.

In October, the city council accepted the housing element update during a public hearing; it was then sent to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) for comment

and review.

On Dec. 9 HCD found that with minor revisions the revised draft element meets the statutory requirements required by the state.

“As you’ll see they are really minor. Many of them were directed at the timing of the programs and adding some background information to the data,” Planning and Building Director Lynn Goldberg said of the suggested changes.

The housing element is one of the very few that require state review. Having the HCD certify the element qualifies the city to receive extra points when applying for grants and confirms that Calistoga is in full compliance with state law.

Goldberg said that by adopting the revised housing element it ful-

See **HOUSING** page 11

City considers lower fees for ‘granny units’

■ Agrees \$35,500 in city fees needs scrutiny

By Pat Hampton
Tribune Publisher

Calistoga will explore lowering the cost of connection fees for second dwelling units to help increase affordable housing stock.

Referred to as “granny units,” city Planning Director Lynn Goldberg said they are an efficient means of increasing the city’s housing stock because they are developed on lots that already have a primary residential unit.

Goldberg said very few of the small homes have been constructed in town. She said the buildings could provide housing for a family member who needs support with everyday activities but wants to live semi-independently. Second-

ary units can also provide affordable housing for single people as well, she said.

Currently, connection fees for second dwellings are roughly \$35,500 for water and wastewater hook-ups, and buildings are limited to 350 to 750 square feet. The present city code also requires the property owner to live in one of the two houses on the parcel, Goldberg said.

Councilmember Jim Barnes suggested waiving the \$40,000 fee and transferring the amount from the city’s housing fund to the general fund.

Mayor Chris Canning cautioned that any solution should not be a “gift of city funds” to homeowners but agreed that the current system wasn’t helpful.

See **GRANNY UNITS** page 11