



Lawsuit vs. garbage company is dropped

By Pat Hampton

Tribune Publisher

Seven plaintiffs who filed suit against Upper Valley Disposal Service have dropped their lawsuit against the Upvalley trash and recycling business.

The St. Helena neighbors claimed the Whitehall Lane facility caused them to experience “unhealthy, harmful and damaging noise, odors and other pollution from the company’s operations.”

Christy Pestoni, COO of UVDS, said the company was in compliance with all its permits. In court documents and interviews, company officials denied all allegations and said UVDS is in compliance with all of its permits, is closely monitored by state and local agencies and follows “industry best practices with respect to safety, fire prevention, leachate prevention, and managing odor and noise issues.”

Plaintiffs Sandra Thompson, John W. Thompson, Paul J. Heiselmann, Leslie Velasco, John Witt, Matt Smith, and Kami Smith voluntarily dismissed their lawsuit against Upper Valley Disposal Service, Upper Valley Recycling, Inc., and Clover Flat Land Fill Inc. (UVDS) last week.

See **LAWSUIT** on page 5

Care home operator, council woman Irais Lopez charged with elder abuse

By Kim Beltran

Tribune Editor

Irais Lopez-Ortega, Calistoga’s vice mayor and administrator of two senior residential care homes, is facing four felony counts of elder abuse following investigations by the Napa County Sheriff’s Office and the state’s Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing Division.

The charges, filed in Napa Superior Court on Aug. 9 at the request of the Napa County District Attorney’s Office, stem from two separate incidents that allegedly occurred on June 29 and July 4 at the Cedars Care Home, according to the criminal complaint, which names only Lopez-Ortega as a defendant.

In addition, the Community Care Licensing Division, responsible for oversight of living facilities for socially dependent children and adults, on Aug. 6 ordered



PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED PHOTO

Calistoga City Council member and licensed long-term residential care home operator Irais Lopez-Ortega has been charged with four felony counts of elder abuse by the Napa County District Attorney’s Office following an investigation of complaints related to an elderly male resident of the Cedars Care Home in Calistoga. Lopez-Ortega has pleaded not guilty to the charges. A hearing is set for Oct. 29 at 8:30 a.m. in Dept. 1 of Napa Superior Court.

the closure of L&B Care Home, an assisted living facility for the elderly owned and operated by Lopez-Ortega. A state-appointed manager was named to oversee operations at L&B, located at 2315 Foothill Boulevard and licensed for

six residents, until the residents could be relocated.

The division is seeking revocation of

See **CHARGES** on page 3

“I’ve been doing this since 1990 and I’m ready to reduce my risk and my stress. I am looking forward to simplifying my life while enjoying the process of making wine,” said longtime vintner Rudy von Strasser. He’s selling the winery and wine making facilities at Lava Vine on the Silverado Trail and joining online wine club Naked Wines to continue making wine for his followers and those who have not heard of his wines.

PHOTO BY
CLARK JAMES MISHLER



von Strasser selling winery for new venture

By Pat Hampton

Tribune Publisher

Looking for a new change of direction, Rudy von Strasser is selling his Strasser Family of Wine tasting room and wine-making facilities on Silverado Trail and is going online exclusively in 2022.

von Strasser, 62, is in the middle of his 38th harvest, with 31 of them as sole proprietor of his own business. This week, he notified his fans and club members that he and wife Rita von Strasser had decided to sell the winery at 965 Silverado Trail “and

entertain a slightly new and different model of winemaking.”

The winery and tasting room for von Strasser and Lava Vine wines will close at the end of the year, he said Wednesday. The property is in escrow but von Strasser declined to name the new buyer.

He admitted that after so many harvests, “I was getting a little burned out running my own business. While I am selling my properties, I will retain my brands. I’ve been doing this since 1990 and I’m ready to reduce my risk and my stress. I am looking forward to simplifying my life while

enjoying the process of making wine.”

A year ago von Strasser joined with Naked Wines, an online wine club based in England that came on the scene in 2006 and has taken the wine world by storm. A subscription-based club of 300,000 members called “Angels,” each Angel pays a monthly fee that goes into their online “wallet” which they can spend on wines from all over the world at a discounted rate.

See **CLOSING** on page 5

Highway 29 roundabout plan intro’d

By Kim Beltran

Tribune Editor

Officials from the Napa Valley Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission held a Zoom webinar on Wednesday to give a birds-eye overview of a plan to eliminate traffic back-ups and accidents on Highway 29 by improving three busy intersections along the busy route.

Although a final decision has not been made pending environmental impact work and public input, it’s likely that the solution will be to install roundabouts at Rutherford Road (State Route 121), Oakville Cross Road and Madison Street at Yountville.

In June, the NVTA, Napa County’s congestion management agency, announced that it had received \$6 million from the MTC for its Napa Valley Forward project, an initiative to improve infrastructure to support safety and better traffic flow.

“Mini-roundabouts were selected to be studied at Oakville Cross and Rutherford roads due to the nominal cost, significant safety considerations, and smaller foot-

See **INTERSECTIONS** Page 5