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BENCHED BY COVID ▶

Calistoga High School multi-sport star
Christian Caldera looks forward to return

PAGE 8



Housing Element update process lengthy, costly

By Pat Hampton
Tribune Publisher

Calistoga is beginning the process of updating the Housing Element of its General Plan, a year-long endeavor that will identify existing and projected housing needs for all segments of the community as well as parcels of land that would support new projects for the next seven-year cycle mandated by the state.

“This is an opportunity for people in Calistoga to have a

dialogue about housing,” said Zach Tusinger, director of Planning and Building, who presented the report.

Calistoga’s Housing Element was last updated in 2014 and adopted by the City Council on Jan. 6, 2015. It covers the state’s current fifth cycle planning period of Feb. 1, 2015 to Jan. 31, 2023.

Tuesday, the City Council voted 5-0 to make goals and

See **UPDATE** on page 5

County budgets \$6.4 million for year’s worth of wildfire prevention efforts

■ Five-year plan to reduce fuel loads, create fire breaks would cost \$43.3M

By Kim Beltran
Tribune Editor

The Napa County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday said yes to a request by the county’s top firefighter for \$6.4 million to spend on wildland fire prevention.

That money, said Napa County

Fire Chief Geoff Belyea, is for year one of a five-year plan that will cost nearly \$44 million – money that the county currently doesn’t have but must find.

“This is not an option. We always have to spend money after disasters and we spend it in the millions of dollars,” board chair Alfredo Pedroza said. “This is about investing proactively to minimize the threat to our community to keep it safe.

“I’m supportive of starting it with some initial funding but we do have

a responsibility to find a sustainable revenue stream,” he also noted.

Fire prevention and preparedness was the topic of 12 separate items on the supervisors’ agenda. The unofficial mini fire summit began mid-morning with a moment of silence to remember and honor the 78 Napa County residents who died of COVID-19 and the three residents who died in last year’s wildfires. It ended

See **FIRE** on page 3

LA RECUA – THE MULE PACK TRAIN

Film by Calistoga woman documents re-creation of historic merchant mule-train trips in Baja Sur



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TRUDI ANGELL

Santa Barbara, Todos Santos film festivals premiere Trudi Angell’s ‘docu-story’ La Recua

By Kim Beltran
Tribune Editor

Back in 1968, a local teen, Trudi Angell, got a horse for her 13th birthday. She and her parents lived right next to Calistoga Ranch Club – a summer camp for families – on Lommel Road. Angell rode her horse all over the neighboring hills and vineyards.

“There were no fences and no worries about lawsuits,” said Angell. “All the neighbors knew each other back then.”

Fast forward 50 years and that same Calistoga kid is still riding mules – and leading tour expeditions – all over the mountains near her adopted home of Loreto, Baja California Sur, Mexico. So it was a natural when her old cowboy guide said he wanted to do a 20-day pack-trip through the heart of the mountains on the original El Camino Real trail, taking a string of donkeys loaded with traditional goods 200 miles south to the capitol city of La Paz, and he wanted it to be filmed.

That’s when the idea for *La Recua – The Mule Pack Train* – was conceived. A little more than three years after Angell and her vaquero guide Dario Higuera completed the epic journey, their documentary is premiered this week and is showing through tomorrow at the Santa Bar-



Trudi Angell, left, documented a 200-mile mule pack-train trip through the dusty, desert mountains of Baja California Sur – a re-enactment of the trek merchants took to deliver goods in the area over 100 years ago.

bara International Film Festival. It is set to play the Todos Santos Film Festival April 15-18 as well.

The film follows Higuera, a 70-year-old traditional saddle maker in Baja California Sur, and his dream of reenacting the old recuas – merchant pack trains that once traveled through the rugged area over 100 years ago, just like his grandfather used to participate in.

Higuera gathers a herd of mules and donkeys, builds saddles and traditional gear for his outfit, and plans the historic re-enactment of the old-time merchant pack trains. Friends and family, including his eight-year-old grandson, join him on his journey and they pack a dozen burros with loads

See **FILM** page 3

To conserve water, city orders irrigation schedule

By Pat Hampton
Tribune Publisher

Residents will be noticed in their next water/wastewater bill that the city is officially in a Stage 2 Water Emergency and conservation measures are in effect, including the return to an odd/even address watering schedule.

Council members approved the emergency following a report by city Public Works director Derek Rayner, who reported that this year’s state allocation of water has dropped from 15% to 5%, a loss of 192.5 acre feet or about 25% of the city’s annual demand.

The last time the city was under an official Stage 2 Water Emergency was in June 2015, Rayner said.

The upcoming water bill will include a list of “Best Manage-

ment Practices for Water Conservation” that residents are expected to follow. The most important action that will help in conserving water is cutting back on outdoor irrigation.

All water customers with outdoor irrigation are asked to water landscape on an odd/even schedule with odd addresses watering on Tuesdays and Fridays and even addresses watering on Mondays and Thursdays.

No outdoor irrigation with potable water is allowed on Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday. No washing sidewalks, buildings, driveways patios or other paved areas is allowed. Households should run full loads through their dishwashers and washing machines.

See **WATER** page 5

City to host virtual study session on NC fairgrounds

By Pat Hampton
Tribune Publisher

The City Council will host a virtual study session on the status of the Napa County Fairgrounds at 5 p.m. on Thursday, April 22.

Councilman Donald Williams on Tuesday made the request in order to discuss the city’s desire to purchase the property as well as citizen concerns over the future of the beloved community asset.

Mayor Chris Canning said there was no new information since last spring when, in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the bond market collapsed and a purchase deal between the city and the county fell apart.

“This council remains committed to acquiring the property,” Canning said. “It’s certainly not from a lack of interest on the city’s part.”

Councilwoman Irais Lopez-Ortega said she thought a community forum was needed to let the community know where things stood.

Williams and Canning sit on the council subcommittee that has negotiated with county staff in the past on the sale. “We simply agreed to take a break,” Williams said. “The council hasn’t talked about it for awhile now and I wanted to revisit it.”

Williams said he did attend an informal meeting of residents on Saturday at the Little League field called by Scott Atkinson, past planning commissioner, to discuss the fairgrounds.

Williams said some people attending the gathering saw the fairgrounds as “this big open space and they’d like to see activities resume there.”