

Calistoga Tribune

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want committee to retain business
BELOW

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As PG&E faces bankruptcy, Calistoga considers creating its own power grid

■ Utility giant, facing billions in legal claims, says service to customers won't be impacted during company's reorganization

By Kim Beltran
Tribune Editor

A day after Pacific Gas & Electric Company said it plans to file for bankruptcy, the Calistoga City Council decided to explore the possibility of tapping into other sources of power – including its vast geothermal aquifer – in order to avoid electric outages.

Though the timing of the council discussion was coincidental to PG&E's announcement, there's a chance that the utility giant's

business woes could negatively impact a promise it made last November to actively seek ways to keep the city's lights on when the rest of the grid is shut down.

"Even though city staff, and also some of you elected officials have been meeting with PG&E officials, and members of the California Public Utilities Commission behind the scenes, there's a broader discussion about our community's resiliency, and what happens when PG&E shuts the lights off again," city manager Dylan Feik said at Tuesday night's City Council meeting.

Last October, Calistoga's already struggling economy took another hit when PG&E turned off power to the city for 18 hours as

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Carlene Moore has resigned as Napa County Fairgrounds CEO, a position she has held since January of 2010. Unconfirmed reports say she has accepted a position with the Del Mar Fairgrounds.

Moore resigns as CEO of fairgrounds

By Kim Beltran
Tribune Editor

Carlene Moore has resigned as chief executive officer of the Napa County Fairgrounds, county officials confirmed Tuesday.

Moore, who began her tenure as CEO of the Calistoga facility in January of 2010, will officially step down on Jan. 31, 2019.

"Carlene Moore has accepted a new position and will be leaving at the end of the month," said Molly Rattigan, deputy county executive officer, in an email to the Tribune. "Napa County's Public Works Department has assumed management of the fairgrounds under Deputy Director Liz Habkirk."

Although Rattigan said she had no details on Moore's new position, rumor in Calistoga was that she had accepted a job with the Del Mar Fairgrounds in Del Mar, California.

Moore declined a request to see **FAIRGROUNDS** Pg. 8

Sudden death of Cal Mart 'Cheese Lady' Patti McBride leaves big void in community

By Claudia Aceves
Tribune Reporter

The community is mourning the loss of long-time resident Patti McBride, who died unexpectedly of a heart attack in her Calistoga home on Monday morning, people close to her said.

She was affectionately known around town as "the Cheese Lady" because for the majority of her 30 years working at Cal Mart, she was the face of the store's cheese department.

Her "bubbly personality" and

penchant for always having a joke to tell endeared McBride, 64, to her coworkers and customers, said Cal Mart office manager Tracey Schmidt.

"Her passing has left a large hole at Cal Mart, and she will be missed greatly by her fellow employees and so many of Cal Mart's customers," Schmidt wrote in an email to the Tribune on Wednesday. "Her presence impacted the store in such a profound and positive way."

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Patti McBride, affectionately known in Calistoga as the "Cheese Lady" at Cal Mart, passed away suddenly this week, leaving a big void in the community where she had lived for more than three decades. Patti worked at Cal Mart for nearly 30 years, the majority as head of the cheese department.

TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO
BY PAT HAMPTON

Loss of businesses on Lincoln Ave. spurs Chamber members to action

■ A steering committee, led by a consultant, will develop a plan to stem the tide of empty storefronts

By Claudia Aceves
Tribune Reporter

Calistoga business owners concerned about a spate of closures in recent months are banding together to try to prevent further exodus.

The Board of Directors of the Calistoga Chamber of Commerce on Tuesday voted to create a steering committee to come up with a plan to preserve local businesses.

"It's still very early, but the vote was to embark on the process," Chamber Executive Director Troy Campbell told the Tribune this week.

Campbell said the steering committee, made up of Chamber members, would include a cross-section of the different businesses, including restaurants, tasting rooms, hotels and retail shops.

Once the committee is created, members will have the opportunity to collect data, including the city's business vacancy rates, and begin setting goals to create an effective retail strategy. However, Campbell said the effort could be at least a year-long process, and that the first step is to hire a consultant to help formulate a plan and engage business owners.

The Chamber's action is in response to a wave of business closures downtown within the last year that included the Carmel Gallery, Puerto Vallarta Restaurant, Brannan's Grill, Goodman's, A Man's Supply, Chicken Scratch, Tanit Pan-Asian Cuisine, and Sugar Train. Three other retail shops – Rabbit Rabbit Fair Trade, Catch and the Calistoga Trading Depot – are set to close their doors within the next few weeks.

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City Council hears CPA finance report, approves new fire, police contracts

By Kim Beltran
Tribune Editor

Calistoga's finances are in good shape and its accounting is accurate and up to date, according to a comprehensive financial report presented to the City Council Tuesday night.

In addition, the council ratified new contracts with its firefighters and police officers that provide annual raises of four percent in 2019 and three percent in 2020 and 2021.

Certified Public Accountant Michael O'Conner of R.J. Ricciardi, Inc., told the council that the city's General Fund balance at the end of the 2017/18 fiscal year was \$8.3 million.

Of that amount, he said, just

over \$6.9 million is "unassigned and available for spending at the City Council's discretion, which is subject to Council-established policies for reserve funds." The remaining \$1.3 million is allocated as prepayments to vendors and advances to the city's wastewater fund (\$685,270).

General Fund revenues for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2018, came in at about \$1.2 million more than budgeted due to one time ERAF property tax payment, FEMA reimbursements for Tubbs fire damages and interest earnings, the city reported. Expenditures, however, were \$1.2 million more than budgeted

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