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Mora residents protest cell tower plan

By Kim Beltran

Tribune Editor

A group of Mora Avenue residents, concerned about a plan to place a “camouflaged” cell tower on their street, expressed to the Calistoga City Council Tuesday night the many reasons why they think it’s a bad idea.

The proposal by Illumination Technologies to install five cell towers – each topped by a fire siren warning system – throughout the city

was not on the council’s agenda for a formal discussion. Rather, some 10 residents living along the rural road near the city’s northwestern boundary came up to speak during the public comment period of the meeting after learning that the company had been holding community forums to answer questions about its plan.

Doug Scranton, who lives on Money Lane near its intersection with Mora, said his con-

cerns were twofold – esthetics and health.

“First the intrusion of something so blatantly commercial into what I consider to be a wonderful, rural neighborhood. A 60-foot tall, fake tree standing alone on the side of the road will be a blight on the landscape – what I believe to be a true eyesore that directly benefits a commercial enterprise, and our mayor, Mr. [Chris] Canning, who I understand is an officer of the company,” Scranton said.

Secondly, he said, “and perhaps more importantly, we don’t really know the health risks of these microwave towers. Studies have been done that suggest the towers are harmless yet others suggest that there could be health consequences.”

At a City Council meeting in early June,

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HOT AUGUST NIGHTS

Gene Duffy shares tips for enjoying 'car nirvana'

By Gene Duffy, Jr.

For the Tribune

Each year, the first week of August, more than 6,000 pre-1975 muscle cars, customs, lowriders, hot rods, rat rods and classics of all types descend upon “The Biggest Little City in the World” – Reno, Nevada – for a week-long festival celebrating all things automotive, including cruising, sock hopping and drag racing, as well as a swap meet, vintage trailers, burn-outs and rock ‘n roll.

This year’s event, the 33rd annual since its inception in 1986, is set for Aug. 2-12, with events in Virginia City for the first two days before the official Hot August Nights kick-off party Monday afternoon at the Peppermill in Reno.

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PHOTO COURTESY HOT AUGUST NIGHTS

Thousands of people visit Reno, Nevada, each August during the Biggest Little City in the World’s annual Hot August Nights, a celebration of pre-1975 automobiles and the 1950s and ‘60s lifestyle.



PHOTO BY GENE DUFFY, JR.

This tricked out ride is a 1956 Ford truck, one of thousands of flashy pre-1975 autos that will be on display in Reno during the 2019 weeklong Hot August Nights event.

City to look at landscape agreements

By Kim Beltran

Tribune Editor

The city will reevaluate landscaping assessment districts for two housing subdivisions after a resident from one called the program “ineffective and inefficient.”

Ryan Gourd who lives on Table Rock Court in what is known as the Palisades subdivision said someone “chopped down” the landscaping between his house and Highway 29, removing what had served as a privacy screen of sorts for his family.

In addition, the lack of maintenance on the property has impacted its drainage, causing water to flood his side yard.

As a condition for the development of the Palisades subdivision in 1993, a landscape assessment district – an annual tax paid by each homeowner in the neighborhood – was created to fund maintenance of the area adjacent to Highway 29 on the north side of the subdivision and along Money Lane between the property fence and sidewalk.

A separate assessment district was created for the neighboring Silverado Place subdivision. Both subdivisions are located behind La

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John Merchant: ‘I like projects’

Developer helping change face of Calistoga since 1988

By Pat Hampton

Tribune Publisher

For 31 years, developer and spa owner John Merchant has helped change the face of Calistoga in ways that have brought him both praise and reprimand since he and his family came to town in 1988 and started buying properties.

The Merchants’ first local purchase was the 44-acre Calistoga Gliderport, which he bought in foreclosure and kept open until 1999 when it was closed, much to the dismay of residents and aviators.

Meanwhile, he and his wife, Pat, purchased Pachetau’s Baths, site of town founder Sam Brannan’s original Hot Springs Resort and the family’s favorite respite from their San Francisco home. After extensive reno-

vation they renamed it Indian Springs Resort & Spa in reference to the Wappo people who had settled the area 5,000 years before.

Between projects, the couple traveled extensively and spent a great deal of time in New York City where Pat Merchant flipped apartments in Manhattan. Locally, she was involved in the Sharpsteen Museum’s home tours fundraiser.

Following a disastrous fire in 2003 at the historic Nance’s Hot Springs Spa, the couple bought it and folded it in to the neighboring Indian Springs.

In 2012, Merchant added 75 new rooms to the existing 41 at the historic resort complex on Lincoln Avenue. The project featured a new event center, gym,

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PHOTO BY PAT HAMPTON

Developer John Merchant talks about the historic Railroad Depot, his newest projects and his 31-years in Calistoga.