

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Whistlestop names 2 top executives

By Adrian Rodriguez
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San Rafael's Whistlestop, a nonprofit for seniors and people with disabilities, has added two new team members to lead operations and development. Mill Valley resident Nancy Geisse has been hired as the chief operating officer. San Rafael resident Bill Cullison has been hired as the development operations director.



Geisse

Geisse, who joined Whistlestop as a consultant in September, will be responsible for over-

seeing all of the nonprofit's programs and services, including transportation, healthy aging and nutrition. Prior to Whistlestop, Geisse was vice president of strategy and business development at Uppercase Branding. She also served as director of project management at Certain Solar, executive vice president at Trio Energy and chief executive officer and founder of MedStep Health Services and ran a consulting practice, providing strategic, financial and business development services to several companies. Cullison is coming off a 14-year career at Guide Dogs for the Blind, where he served most recently as development services manager. In his new role, Cullison will be reporting to

CEO Joe O'Hehir and is responsible for managing Whistlestop's development department, including donor cultivation and acquisition, and donor programs and events.



Cullison

The board of Marin's Spahr Center announced that Jennifer Malone, the center's executive director, is leaving after 16 years with the nonprofit. The board has begun a search for a new director. The Spahr Center is Marin's only HIV and AIDS community provider, offering counseling, benefits advocacy and emergency finan-

cial services and LGBTQ social and support groups and activities. Newmark Knight Frank, a global commercial real estate advisory firm, has hired Mike Kirner as the director of public relations and communications for the Northwestern region. Kirner has 20 years of experience in communications, including four years in the commercial real estate industry. In his new role, he will oversee communications for the firm's 10 northern California offices, including one in San Rafael, as well as offices in Seattle and Portland. Movers and Shakers is compiled by Adrian Rodriguez and appears weekly. Send information to arodriguez@marinij.com.

Voting

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friendly Vote Center model as authorized by SB 450. We are exploring the idea of vote centers, Roberts said. We're in the process of reviewing it and looking at the cost. SB 450, the California Voters Choice Act, signed into law by former Gov. Jerry Brown in 2016, allows all counties beginning in Jan. 1, 2020, to replace polling places with vote centers and to send a vote-by-mail ballot to each registered voter.

The vote centers would function as virtual, temporary elections departments providing all the voter services available in a permanent elections department including voter registration, voting, issuing ballots and ballot drop-off. The legislation requires that some number of vote centers be open on Election Day and the 10 days prior to Election Day. The number of vote centers required would be based on the number of registered voters and would increase in the final four days prior to Election Day. The legislation allowed Sacramento and four other

California counties to make the switch in 2018 as a pilot project. Sacramento County replaced 500 polling places with 78 vote centers. We're waiting for reports on the success of it, said Greg Brockbank, a member of Marin County's Election Advisory Committee. So far the initial indications are it looks good so my guess is most other counties will adopt it in the next year or two or three. The Election Advisory Committee was created by Roberts' predecessor in 2006 to provide advice and recommendations to the Registrar of Voters on voter participation and election integrity issues. It is also weighing in on the new system purchase. Brockbank and other members of the committee said that if the county decides to switch to the voter center model that decision could affect how large a new system it needs. There is some question about how many machines do we need, Brockbank said. If we go to vote centers, it is a very different operation than continuing with polling place operations. He estimated that Marin County might be able to replace its 90 polling places

with about 16 vote centers. Steve Silberstein, another member of the committee, said, They're going to buy too many machines because they will eventually move to the vote center model. Assistant County Administrator Dan Eilerman said the county might hedge its bets by leasing some of the new voting machines instead of purchasing them outright. Silberstein favors the vote center model for several reasons. He likes the fact that the centers are open for an additional 10 days, giving people more opportunities to vote. He also likes the fact that the approach ensures that everyone gets a vote-by-mail ballot. He said that in Colorado, where the model was developed, the state has cut its election costs in half. Its a huge savings in terms of the number of machines you have to buy, Silberstein said. Roberts said while there could be some equipment cost savings there would be increased staffing costs with the vote centers. She said the California counties that piloted the program have seen a big cost in their staffing for vote centers because they are open for 11 days, eight hours a day, and

on weekends. Tom Montgomery, another Election Advisory Committee member, said he is also concerned about unforeseen costs such as leasing office space for the vote centers. Brockbank noted that since there would be fewer centers it might be harder for voters who don't have cars to get to the centers to vote. He said for most voters it would be more convenient, however, since they would be allowed to cast their vote at any of the centers. Roberts said one thing is clear: The county needs to replace its existing system as soon as possible to increase the speed with which it can count vote-by-mail ballots. In the Nov. 6 midterm election, only about a quarter of the ballots, some 34,000, arrived on Election Day. Seventy-four percent of those who voted, some 97,450 people, used a vote-by-mail ballot, and 18 percent of them, some 23,995 people, hand-delivered their vote-by-mail ballots. Only 26 percent of voters, some 34,984 people, cast their ballot at a polling place. Marin's final vote count for that election was posted on Nov. 30, 24 days after Election Day.

Border

FROM PAGE 1

and lawmakers over border security. The Senate passed the legislation 83-16, with both parties solidly on board. The House followed with a 300-128 tally, with Trump's signature planned Friday. Both margins were above the two-thirds majorities needed to override presidential vetoes, though one wasn't expected and lawmakers sometime back a president of the same party in such battles. Lawmakers exuded relief that the agreement had averted a fresh closure of federal agencies just three weeks after a record-setting 35-day partial shutdown that drew an unambiguous thumbs-down from the public. But in announcing that Trump would sign the accord, White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders also said he'd take other executive action, including a national emergency. In an unusual joint statement, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said such a declaration would be a lawless act, a gross abuse of the power of the presidency and a desperate attempt to distract from Trump's failure to force Mexico to pay for

the wall, as he's promised for years. Pelosi and Schumer also said Congress will defend our constitutional authorities. They declined to say whether that meant lawsuits or votes on resolutions to prevent Trump from unilaterally shifting money to wall-building, with aides saying they would wait to see what he does. Democratic state attorneys general said they would consider legal action to block Trump. Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello told the president on Twitter we'll see you in court if he makes the declaration. Despite widespread opposition in Congress to proclaiming an emergency, including by some Republicans, Trump is under pressure to act unilaterally to soothe his conservative base and avoid looking like he's surrendered in his wall battle. The abrupt announcement of Trump's plans came late in an afternoon of rumblings that the volatile president who'd strongly hinted he'd sign the agreement but never definitively was shifting toward rejecting it. That would have infused fresh chaos into a fight both parties are desperate to leave behind, a thought that drove some lawmakers to seek heavenly help. Let's all pray that the president will have wisdom to sign the bill so the government doesn't shut

down, Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, said after a chaplain opened Thursday's Senate session. Moments before Sanders spoke at the White House, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., took to the Senate floor to announce Trump's decisions to sign the bill and declare an emergency. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, told reporters there were two hours of phone calls between McConnell and the White House before there were assurances that Trump would sign. In a surprising development, McConnell said he would support Trump's emergency declaration, a turnaround for the Kentucky Republican, who like many lawmakers had opposed such action. Democrats say there is no crisis at the border and Trump is merely sidestepping Congress. And some Republicans warn that future Democratic presidents could use his precedent to force spending on their own priorities such as gun control. GOP critics included Maine Sen. Susan Collins, who said emergency declarations are for major natural disasters or catastrophic events and said its use would be of dubious constitutionality. White House aides and congressional Republicans have said that besides an emergency, Trump might assert other authorities that could conceivably put him

within reach of billions of dollars. The money could come from funds targeted for military construction, disaster relief and counterdrug efforts. Congressional aides say there is \$21 billion in military construction money that could potentially be used by Trump if he declares a national emergency. But according to the law the money has to be used in support of U.S. armed forces, they say. The Defense Department declined to provide details on available money. With many of the Democrats' liberal base voters adamantly against Trump's aggressive attempts to curb immigration, four declared presidential hopefuls opposed the bill in the Senate: Cory Booker of New Jersey, New York's Kirsten Gillibrand, Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Kamala Harris of California. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota voted for it, as did Vermont independent Bernie Sanders, who is expected to join the field soon. Notably, the word wall, the heart of many a chant at Trump campaign events and his rallies as president, is absent from the compromise's 1,768-page legislative and descriptive language. Barriers and fencing are the nouns of choice, a victory for Democrats eager to deny Trump even a rhetorical victory.

Council

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The final design packages would be due in early May in time for the committee to select its recommended applicant to be considered by the Town Council. If all goes according to plan, construction could begin by January 2020. Colbert said about

\$750,000 to \$1 million will come from a grant administered through the county. The rest of the project would be paid for through private fundraising, an effort that he is also spearheading. While there were concerns that the plan may be too aggressive considering the tight timeline, residents and council members are hopeful. As a frequent user of downtown open space

with my son, I'm incredibly enthusiastic about the vision that Councilmember Colbert put forth, said Kurt Johnson. I agree, it's a fabulous opportunity to seize these funds, which the county is providing at no cost to the town to do something magnificent for the town. Kerrie McHugh, a member of the town's arts commission, said the park serves as a vital gathering place with town-hosted

events like movies in the park, Beatles tribute concerts and other family-oriented happenings. I would just love to see that park utilized more, she said, noting that she is excited about the project. I would really encourage everyone to rethink what we can do to a downtown common area because it could be really incredible. The survey is available at bit.ly/2tikau7

In your town

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BELVEDERE

Pier project returned to planning board

A waterfront project at 121 Belvedere Ave. has been punted back to the Planning Commission for additional review. The project calls for a new pier, deck and slope elevator, among other features. After the Planning Commission approved the project on Jan. 15, a neighbor appealed to the City Council, claiming procedural flaws and detriments to views and property values. The appeal went before the City Council on Monday. In a unanimous vote, the council returned the matter to the Planning Commission for further consideration and to direct the applicant to install story poles that more accurately show the project to the extent reasonable and feasible. said Rebecca Markwick, associate city planner.

LARKSPUR

Council to receive bridge work update

The city staff will provide an update on the Bon Air Bridge replacement project during the upcoming City Council meeting. As of Jan. 30, the project was 17 percent through its projected schedule of four years and one month, according to a memorandum by Julian Skinner, public works director and city engineer. The project had incurred nearly \$6.7 million in costs, or 25 percent of the planned \$26.7 project cost, Skin-

ner said.

The contractor bills the city at the end of each month, and then the city files for an 88.53-percent reimbursement from the California Department of Transportation. The open session portion of the City Council meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Wednesday.

MILL VALLEY

Signage, crossings eyed for intersection

The city is considering traffic safety changes at the intersection of Hill Street and Buena Vista Avenue in the downtown area. The plan would involve installing crosswalks on all four sides of the intersection and stop signs on the Buena Vista Avenue sides. The Hill Street approaches already have stop signs. Residents requested improvements because of sight obstructions at the intersection, according to a city staff report. The City Council will hold a hearing on the proposal at its meeting on Feb. 21. The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall.

NOVATO

Fire district revises hours at main office

The fire district is changing the hours of operation for its administrative office at 95 Rowland Way. Starting today, the hours will be 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. Previously, the office remained staffed through the lunch hour.



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