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Photo courtesy Andree Soares/Star Creek Land Stewards

Here come the goats!

By Nick Marnell

It may not sound as romantic as the swallows returning to Capistrano, and no hit song has been recorded (yet) about their activities, but the return of the goats to Orinda Downs signals a rite of the Lamorinda spring: time to prepare for wildfire season.

The Orinda Downs Homeowners Association has again

contracted with Star Creek Land Stewards of Los Banos for a goat herd to clear vegetation in the open space west of Happy Valley Road and north of Sundown Terrace, toward Orinda View Road.

“The neighborhood was proactive. They ran with it, and did a lot of neighborhood outreach,” Kathy Leonard, fire mar-

shal of the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, said of the association members. “They were super receptive to our fire safety suggestions and they applied to the Diablo Fire Safe Council for a mini-grant.” The council offers cost sharing of up to \$5,000 per project to create defensible space, according to DFSC representative Cheryl Miller.

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Free Rose for Every Mom from 5A through May 12th

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

Best wishes to all our Moms out there who do so much for all of us! We honor and appreciate you! Please come in by 5/12 and get a FREE Rose for you if you're a Mom, or for your Mom. 455 Moraga Rd., Ste. F



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Lafayette's planning commission cranking back into action

By Pippa Fisher

The city has appointed its first replacement commissioner to allow the planning commission to get back to work.

Following the mass resignation of five of Lafayette's seven planning commissioners as a result of the new stricter conflict of interest policies, the commission was left unable to function. The city council voted to reduce the number of commissioners from seven to five in the short term and has temporarily taken over the reins as a planning commission.

Now, with the appointment of Greg Mason – a senior structural plans examiner – and the remaining two members, the commission will be up to three, enough to form a quorum.

City attorney Mala Subramanian advised the council that it is released of planning commission duties except for two cases it has already started on.

City Council Member Mike Anderson explained at the April 23 city council

meeting that he and Mayor Don Tatzin, as members of the subcommittee, are holding ongoing interviews together with the two remaining commissioners, Gary Huisinh and Steven Bliss.

Anderson said that they are not eliminating any candidates at this point and that interviews would continue into May. However they had decided that if a uniquely qualified candidate presented it would be good to appoint them right away.

Anderson said that Mason had agreed to the new conflict of interest policy, explaining that he doesn't work in Lafayette.

Those interested in volunteering on the planning commission should go to the city website <http://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/commissions-committees/planning-commission> for an application form and for details of the commission's work plan.

PG&E to close St. Mary's Road for the summer

By Sophie Braccini

Pacific Gas and Electric Co. informed the city of Lafayette and the town of Moraga that it would have to replace a mile of pipe under St. Mary's Road in the coming months. The plan as it currently stands will completely close the arterial from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday, from June 7 to Aug. 17.

The utility is seeking encroachment permits from both municipalities to execute its plan, but several questions surfaced during the public presentations that were held last week: Why there and why now? Will the new pipe be safe? How will emergency access be handled?

A major PG&E communications effort is expected in the coming weeks.

When PG&E first came to meet the two cities it proposed a 100-day plan that would have partially closed the arterial, sometimes allowing for one-way traffic, but would have affected the school commute. Both staff teams asked PG&E for a shorter alternative that would impact the road only when school is out.

The work plan that was approved by both councils will start south of the South Lucille Lane intersection in Lafayette on June 7 and a first section of the road will be closed all the way to Driftwood Drive until July 20. The work on the second section from Driftwood Drive to the south of Bollinger Canyon Road should end on Aug. 17. During construction, through traffic will be rerouted from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and residents with no other access will be permitted on the road one at a time. The last phase, replacement of the valve at South Lucille Lane, will be completed after Aug. 17 but should not require closing St. Mary's Road.

About 40 Lafayette residents live on Dirftwood Drive, Shire Oaks Court, and Cattle Shute Road with no other outlet than that section of St. Mary's Road. In Moraga the entire Bluffs neighborhood of over 100 homes will be blocked at some point, plus the residents of unincorporated county land whose sole outlet to civilization is Bollinger Canyon Road.

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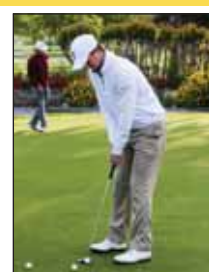
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