



President's Letter

TRANSITIONS



"If there wasn't change, everything would always be the same." ~Flo Lobanks

In the last week of December, I was sitting on a log in a quiet sandy spot along the Carmel River, and I was reflecting about year-end and the approaching transition from 2023 to 2024 as we close in on finishing another trip around the sun.

And that means, it's Transition Time! Transitions don't come easily to a lot of folks, which is not surprising, even if there is good reason for them. The best transitions, of course, are seamless ones. But try telling yourself that, if it means you're the one who has to accommodate the change. Transitions always seem to come with uncomfortable and unexpected seams that can potentially mean tightening the ole belt, or worse still, realizing that you need a strict New Year's resolution to avoid going up a pant size.

It seems more and more every day, we're going to be swallowing transitions like a 7-11 Big Gulp. Winter turns to spring. The 2024 election cycle revs up, and many more are sure to follow.

One change that CVA has long been anticipating is starting to come into focus as of the writing of this newsletter in January. That is the county's EIR on short-term rentals. By the time you read this, the EIR has already been distributed by the county (and public comment period on the subject will have closed), and CVA expects to have a better picture of potential impacts and enforcement mechanisms. The affordable housing initiative mandated by the state should also be moving forward.

Another demonstration of the long arm of transitions, and one we all have a front

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CHS STADIUM LIGHTS SHED LIGHT ON CONFLICTING ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

by Charles M. Wahle, PhD

A Land Framed by Its Views: The Importance of Natural Viewsheds

Carmel Valley is surrounded by spectacular natural beauty from the headwaters of the Carmel River watershed to the wild shores of the Pacific Ocean. Many are drawn here by the opportunity to see and appreciate these iconic landscapes, from Carmel Valley residents to visitors and businesses who sustain our hospitality and real estate-driven economy, to artists who reflect our natural environment in enduring stories, poems, art, and songs, to native communities whose ancestors have for millennia called the Carmel Valley home. The enduring works of Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, Robinson Jeffers, and John Steinbeck give voice to power of these coastal and valley landscapes. Preserving them is the responsibility and challenge of every generation. This is a story about how this idea -- shepherding our collective natural heritage -- collided with a desire for Friday Night football games at Carmel High, and about what we can learn for the future.

Let There Be Lights @ CHS

The Drumbeat for Stadium Lights: Carmel High School (CHS) has hosted daytime football games for eight decades. Now, after years of effort and millions of dollars spent on planning, controversy, revised EIRs, legal fees, and construction, CHS joins the ranks of American schools hosting nighttime football games under the bright glare of their own Friday Night Lights. CHS's new stadium lights are intended by Carmel Unified School District to (1) provide safer and more effective playing conditions for dark evening practices, especially if CUSD eventually switches to the state-mandated "Late Start" daily schedule; (2) enable a

limited number of nighttime home games to be played under the lights; (3) allow CHS's athletics programs to match the more expansive sports infrastructure of other regional high schools; and (4) enhance school spirit after a challenging period.

What's In the Box: Carmel Unified School District's CHS Stadium Improvement Project delivers more than just four 80-foot stadium lights. Other improvements include replacing existing swimming pool lights with dark sky fixtures (completed), expanding spectator viewing areas, enhancing parking and traffic flow on campus, along with other long-sought infrastructure fixes.

Current Status of the CHS Lights: Following CUSD's 2022 approval of its Final EIR, a lawsuit was filed and later withdrawn by concerned citizens. The new stadium lights were installed and field-tested in Fall 2023. According to the *Carmel Pine Cone*, the new lights were deemed compliant with the DarkSky International criteria, as required by the Final EIR. Their first use for night games and evening practices at CHS awaits pending state approval of various safety-related requirements.

What's Not To Like? Residents' Concerns about the Stadium Lights

Like similar stadium lights projects, CUSD's plan sparked considerable controversy. Residents raised concerns about a variety of environmental, health, and safety risks posed by the lights' use for nighttime games and practices. Concerns were offered officially during several CUSD listening sessions, Board of Education meetings, and in written comments on the draft and final EIRs, as well as in local print and social media. To CUSD's credit, many safety- and nuisance-related concerns were ultimately addressed in the Final EIR's binding mitigation measures, which if fully and

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Hidden Valley Music Seminars

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row seat to has been in progress for over a century. The Carmel Valley grange, which in 2024 celebrates the 134th anniversary of its founding as a central gathering venue for the valley community in the late eighteenth-hundreds, is up for sale. Its once-expansive rural site has been hemmed in over the decades by shopping centers, housing developments, and busy roadways, and now the space it occupies is difficult to get to with a location that has barely enough elbow room to turn around in. Its future is uncertain, but something worthy will be lost if this rare example of early valley history and architecture cannot be restored and again demonstrate the significance and value it can bring in the important role of supporting community ties.

A happy transition and addition to our community also occurred in 2023, when The Wildlands Conservancy (TWC) completed its purchase of the 14,000-acre Rana Creek Ranch. The Wildlands Conservancy is a great new neighbor and partner in the Carmel Valley community. As part of the purchase transaction, TWC worked with local agencies and financial groups to create a grant for the Esselen tribe to purchase a portion of the Rana Creek property in partnership with TWC. This brings a long-ago transition for this native tribe full circle, from being removed during the mission era from their native lands which the Esselens had occupied for centuries, to at last having the land returned to them.

In closing, I want to share with you that this year I find that I am also faced with a transition. Next month, March 31st, marks the end of my second term as CVA President, and I will not be returning for a third term. But be assured CVA's work will continue as it has for over 75 years. 2024 marks CVA's 75th anniversary since its founding in 1949, and the organization continues in its dedication to preserving and protecting the rural character of the Valley. Strong community support continues, with new membership, and many residents eager to become active volunteers. CVA will continue working to support important community needs and providing enriching programs, such as can be found through CVA's Natural & Cultural Heritage Committee.

Thanks to all who have been so generous with time and support for the CVA organization and for the many ways our Carmel Valley residents support this wonderful community.
C.S. Noel

In Memoriam: Eleanor Avila



CVA board members and advisers come and go over the years, but we always had the impression that our historian, Eleanor Avila, would be there to assist us forever. So the board was saddened and surprised to learn of her passing on December 1.

Eleanor had been helping the CVA board for so long that not even the most senior board members know when she started. For about 20 years, she worked quietly and conscientiously behind the scenes organizing the CVA office, filing documents, answering questions about CVA history, encouraging and helping with historical publications, and playing a major role in the laborious move from one storage area to another a few years ago—all on a volunteer basis. She was well-liked by all board members and respected for her knowledge and dedication to our mission of keeping the valley rural. She was a true lover of Carmel Valley and will be greatly missed.

Santa Fly-In Parade Delights All



The kids all promised to be very very good.



Lights, continued from Pg. 1

consistently implemented, should reduce, if not completely eliminate, some impacts.

Concerns about the stadium lights generally fall into three categories, differing in where, how and by whom their impacts are felt. The third category below, *Viewshed Impacts*, is the real subject of this article.

1) Disruptions to Campus and Adjacent Neighborhoods – Enabled by the new stadium lights, nighttime games are likely to worsen existing or create new problems in nearby areas. These may include noise pollution resulting from PA systems, music and shouting crowds during games, parking problems, traffic safety risks, crowd management, and emergency access challenges. It remains to be seen whether CUSD's plans to avoid or mitigate these risks will be effective.

2) Localized Light Spillover - As seen in other school settings, people living near the CHS campus expressed strong concerns over the likelihood that the new lights would spill intense light beyond the stadium and onto their homes and streets. Using state-of-the-art LED fixtures, the new CHS lights are designed to focus downward light beams narrowly onto the playing field, thereby reducing spillover onto neighboring properties. Even so, the intensely lighted stadium creates an unnaturally bright feature on the formerly dark landscape. [Photos 1, 2, on page 4]

3) Widespread Degradation of Viewsheds– Beyond the immediate campus area, the stadium lights' physical presence and intense glare will permanently impair coastal and valley views. The implications of these impacts are explored below.

'Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Visual Impacts': What It Means to and About Us

CUSD's Final EIR acknowledges that the new CHS stadium lights will create '*significant and unavoidable adverse visual impacts*' on local viewsheds that cannot be effectively mitigated. As required by California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in this situation, the district issued a 'Certification of Overriding Circumstances' to justify dismissing these known impacts to our shared viewsheds and approved the CHS stadium light project. Facilitating this step, CUSD also asserted its legal exemption, as a Special District, from local and state zoning rules and norms that might otherwise constrain the project over this issue. Now

installed and soon to be in active use, CUSD's stadium lights will forever impact our visual environment in two important ways:

1) Loss of Naturally Dark and Starry Nights

While the new lights focus much of their light downward onto the playing field, the poles also contain upward and laterally-facing lights to illuminate the ball from below while it is travelling high over the field (e.g. during a kickoff, punt, or long pass). These special lights are reportedly required safety features for nighttime sports.

Despite the CHS lights' recently reported DarkSky International certification based largely on localized light spillover, the combination of downward, sideways, and upward-facing lights is likely to be sufficiently bright to diminish or even prohibit successful viewing of the night sky in the areas beyond CHS. Especially during the kind of hazy weather that characterizes our region, the new stadium lights are likely to produce marked 'light domes' over broad areas, similar to those created by the former CHS pool lights. [Photo 3]

2) Degraded Viewsheds of Iconic Geographic Features

Many Carmel-area residents, businesses, and visitors highly value and wish to preserve our coastal and valley viewsheds. Nevertheless, CUSD's new stadium lights will permanently impair them by:

Light Poles: The four 80-foot metal light poles themselves, even when unlit, are readily visible from many vantage points and clearly protrude into the viewshed of Point Lobos looking seaward, and into the valley views from Highway 1 looking inland across the campus. These artificial structures, while possibly inoffensive to some, nevertheless permanently mar some of California's most iconic protected coastal views. [Photo 4] Trivialized in CUSD's EIR, the light poles' lasting visual impacts cannot be mitigated in the current plan.

Light Glare: When lit, the four clusters of bright LED lights create an intense glare visible from all directions, impairing evening views near them, particularly in the Fall when many field sports practices and spectacular sunsets co-occur. When fully operational, the CHS stadium lights will, as acknowledged in the EIR, degrade Carmel-area residents' and visitors' enjoyment of these views that are so deeply important to many. [Photos 5, 6] These effects will be intensified when the new stadium lights are

used simultaneously with the existing pool lights.

Moving Forward

The contentious and sometimes bitter debate about CUSD's stadium lights at CHS was very challenging for all involved, including CHS students and the community at large. Throughout, the fundamental, and most fraught, decision revolved around one central question: Do the benefits of having lighted evening practices and nighttime sports games at Carmel High outweigh their acknowledged harm to the wider community's coastal and valley viewsheds? CUSD's answer was a unanimous "yes."

While I continue to disagree and believe that Carmel's stadium lights are a great idea in the wrong location, we all need to focus now on how we can enrich and shape future decisions affecting our shared environment.

A few practical steps by the community might include:

- Monitor CUSD's required mitigation measures to ensure they are effective and consistently implemented over time. If not, demand adjustments.
- Synthesize existing legal authorities and policies designed to protect intangible resources like viewsheds and soundscapes and proactively use them to assess and respond to future such proposals.
- Develop a consensus concerning the area's shared environmental values and priorities, and articulate them clearly and often to our decision-makers, whether elected or appointed.
- Ensure that these values are reflected in the upcoming revision of the Carmel Valley Master Plan.

Ours is a diverse community shaped by a rugged landscape and bonded by a shared reverence for its natural viewsheds. As its stewards, we hold its future in our hands, not just for ourselves and for those who follow, but for those who came before. How we go about doing that is important, and we can and must do it better.

I look forward to working toward that with CVA's new Natural and Cultural Heritage Committee on these matters.

For more on lighting, visit darksky.org.

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AUTHOR NOTE: Dr. Charlie Wahle, a retired conservation science and policy professional, serves on CVA Board and chairs its new Natural and Cultural Heritage Committee. He was engaged in the CEQA review of the CHS lights until it was approved by CUSD and then turned to wider environmental issues affecting the Carmel Valley.

NEW YEAR, NEW LEAF...BLOWER

by Paola Berthoin

Did you know that running a gas-powered, commercial leaf blower for one hour is the equivalent of driving about 14 hours, or 1110 miles in a new, light-duty passenger car? Leaf blowers and other gas-powered landscape equipment are not regulated like cars. As a result, they pollute our air with unhealthy fumes and particulate matter, not to mention the very loud, obnoxious sound. Just this past Christmas Day, a leaf blower was in use in this writer's neighborhood. The fumes settled down and the sound certainly ruined the peace of the holiday morning.

A new law, first in the nation, went into effect in California this January 1, 2024. No new sales are allowed of gas-powered blowers, lawnmowers, chainsaws, generators, or other small engines. Carmel banned the use of the blowers way back in 1975 and Monterey in 2021, so this law really shouldn't come as a surprise. While Monterey County has yet to ban the use of the equipment like the cities have, the Monterey Bay Air Resources District has a new Landscape Equipment Exchange Program (LEEP) that helps homeowners and gardeners out with the purchase of new equipment. Check it out at www.mbard.org/LEEP. Inform your neighbors and gardeners how they can turn a new leaf for a quieter neighborhood and help clean the air we all depend on.

And one other gardening tip...leave the leaves to decompose. The birds will thank you, as will the worms and other organisms that help to enrich the earth as they work to decompose the leaves.



4) CHS stadium light poles dissecting a daytime view of Point Lobos –Photo: A. Delahanty



1) Downward-focused light beams from CHS's new stadium lights during Nov. 2023 tests –Photo: F. Dillard



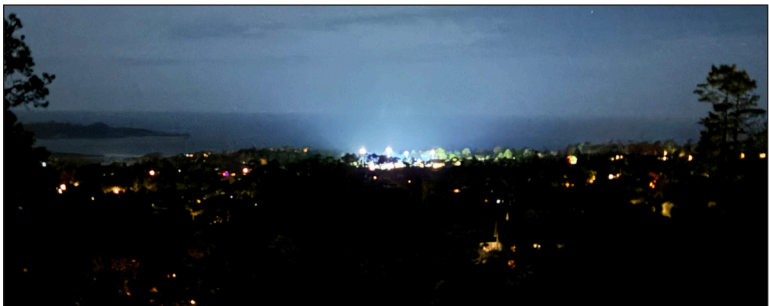
5) Unlit CHS stadium lights against an evening sunset over Point Lobos –Photo: E. Chornesky



2) CHJ stadium lights' horizontal footprint as seen from Carmel Views –Photo: A. Miller



3) Example of a 'light dome' in the sky over CHS pool, prior to 2023 installation of dark sky fixtures –Photo: L. Arthur



6) CHS stadium lights illuminating the night sky and coastal viewshed during Nov. 2023 tests –Photo: L. Arthur



Photo from Indybay.org

ONE CARMEL DEVELOPMENT WELL UNDERWAY



photo by Mibs McCarthy

It used to be September Ranch. Now it's called One Carmel. The property was purchased from the Morgans family by Hong Kong investors in 2017, and its development is underway and hard to miss by drivers on Carmel Valley Road.

With plans approved for the project's entrance across from Brookdale Drive, and with work underway to widen Carmel Valley Road, activity at the site has been clearly visible to drivers. The roadwork is expected to be finished by February and will be followed with trenching for a sewer line, connecting the project to the Carmel Area Wastewater District's water treatment system.

The first phase of the project, at the eastern side of the property, includes plans for an equestrian center at the front of the ranch. Out of sight, back in the hills, work is underway with grading for the roads and installation of underground utilities that will serve the 36 market rate home sites and 22 affordable units in Phase 1.

With the recent rains, two seasonal catch basins near the entrance have captured the storm runoff. The adjacent fields, showing green growth, have been hydroseeded with native grasses.

Plans for the equestrian center include the construction of two riding arenas, one open and one covered. Other buildings will

by Larry Bacon

provide some 24 enclosed stalls, tack rooms and wash racks, and office and visitor spaces.

The architect's renderings for the equestrian center incorporate extensive use of corten steel, which ages to a rusty finish, and wood paneling. The objective of the construction is to present a rustic country look while siting the buildings to blend into the hills and maintain open sight lines as seen from Carmel Valley Road.

The red barn will be retained, but just as a storage facility. The cost of seismic improvements to make this local landmark safe for broader uses is too high to be practical. To the west of the red barn the pastures will be fenced for turnouts, and plans call for a wooden rail fence to be installed along the front of the property next to the road.

More development information is available at the One Carmel website: onecarmel.com.

Historical Society Anniversary



130 revelers at the Carmel Valley History Center celebrated the 10 years of operation while reacquainting with old friends and meeting many new members. The latest exhibit, "Historical Snapshots," was a hit, with the collection featuring some images from as far back as the 18th Century. Visit carmelvalleyhistoricalsociety.org.

Angel Project Holiday Success

The Angel Project fulfilled its mission for another year by providing the community Thanksgiving dinner and gifts and food to brighten the holidays for Carmel Valley families. More at cvangelproject.org



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Page 1 banner photo by Ron Pierce, Dec. 23

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HOW TO BE COOL AND HELPFUL IN AN EMERGENCY

At least one thousand Monterey Peninsula citizens have participated in Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training and learned valuable life skills in emergency response. You can join the well-organized Carmel Valley group at the next training in April. It is free and open to all residents of Carmel Valley.

The nationally published FEMA curriculum educates local individuals on basic disaster preparedness skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, triage and disaster medical operations, through classroom training and exercises. Members also assist in searches for lost persons, particularly children.

To join the April training, send an email to training@montereycert.org.

CVA BOARD ELECTION

It's time for our annual CVA Board of Directors election. Current board members nominated for new three-year terms are Marianne Gawain, John Heyl, Rick Manning, Mibs McCarthy, Marlene Martin, and Pris Walton.

Any CVA member in good standing may nominate other candidates by gathering 15 member signatures and submitting them to P.O. Box 157, CV, CA 93924 by February 21st. If other nominations are submitted, ballots will be sent out by email (or postal service mail, if requested) by March 1st, with votes due back by March 14th. If there are no new petition candidates, the slate will automatically be appointed. New terms begin on April 1st.