

Play like a girl: Luna tackles football for senior year

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Bret Harte football coach resigns

Kester cites controversy over recent game for decision to leave

By GUY DOSSI
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On Tuesday morning, the Casey Kester era at Bret Harte High School came to an end. After three games into his fifth season as Bret Harte's head football coach, Kester resigned.

However, the events which led to Kester resigning began days ago and came to an end Tuesday morning. According to Kester, during a conversation with Bret Harte athletic director Cathy Stelling, the coach didn't hear the word "fired," but believed he could see the writing on the walls.



Enterprise photo by Guy Dossi
Casey Kester resigned as head coach of the Bret Harte High School football team on Tuesday.

"There was no overt mention of the word firing, but it was clear by the tone of the conversation that there were actions that were going to be taken, at

least that was my impression from the way she presented herself, the way she carried herself, the tone of the questions, the tone of the reactions and that the only option I had was to resign or to be fired," Kester said Tuesday afternoon as he was cleaning out his Bret Harte office. "That was my take. If I misread (the conversation), she did nothing to correct it."

In regard to Kester being "forced" to resign, Stelling said, "(If he believes he was forced to resign) I would say that Casey and I need to talk, because we have very different views of the conversation that we had this morning. I am adamant that he was not nudged. He made the decision to resign. If he says something different, I would have to wholeheartedly disagree."

Tuesday morning's conversation between Kester and Stelling was a result of a parent's comments made during a Monday night school board meeting.

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Garamendi announces re-election bid for District 2

By DAVIS HARPER
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Jack Garamendi, Calaveras County supervisor for District 2, is running for re-election in 2020.

District 2 includes the communities of Mokelumne Hill, Paloma, West Point, Wilseyville, Glencoe/Rail Road Flat, Sheep Ranch, Mountain Ranch and Calaveritas.

The Mokelumne Hill native ran unopposed in the 2016 election, and was sworn into office in January of 2017.



In a phone interview with the Enterprise on Sept. 13, Garamendi shared his reasons for running.

"I believe our county is heading in a positive direction and I want to continue to be a part of that. There are many ongoing projects that I want to continue," Garamendi said, with reference to the disaster recovery from the 2015 Butte Fire and supporting local economic development initiatives. "I'm excited about the future and some of the projects we're going to take on, and I feel I have a commitment to my community to move these forward. Bringing higher education opportunities, new business opportunities, these are ongoing but exciting prospects."

Garamendi said the Board of Supervisors has accomplished a lot for the county in the past three years, including developing a process for repairing infrastructure damaged by the Butte Fire, improving disaster planning and completing the General Plan.

He said the biggest challenges for District 2 include continuing to recover from the Butte Fire, creating a resilient fire-safe community and making policy decisions that will keep the local economy growing.

"I don't think that you ever recover from something as devastating as the Butte Fire," Garamendi said. "How do we rebuild the communities that have suffered so much? I don't know if there is an end to that."

That said, the road to recovery, and creating a fire safe community, more generally, require a cocktail of initiatives, Garamendi said.

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

FUN IN A BUN

Valley Springs eatery specializes in gourmet hot dogs, burgers, more

By DAVIS HARPER
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What makes Hawg Dawgs special?

"There's no other food like it here in this town," according to Louis Menard, the owner of the restaurant.

Where else in Valley Springs can a hungry heart get poutine or prime rib tacos, receive a customary Oreo with the bill and vote on what the hot dog of the week should be?

Specializing in gourmet hot dogs, steaks and burgers, the family-owned eatery has grabbed the attention of motorcyclists passing through and regulars from the surrounding area for the past 13 years.

A longtime customer of the establishment situated next to Starbucks off of Highway 26 in Valley Springs, Menard took the reins in May of 2018 after longtime owner Jeff Salori decided to close up shop. Salori died later that year.

"He'd been around a long time. He built this place up," Menard said in the eatery on a busy Friday night.

Menard wanted the place to stay open, and he had always wanted a restaurant.

"I cook a lot, and my father had a restaurant back in Canada, so I grew up" in the food industry, he said.

Menard has made some changes since taking over. Whereas there used to be three specials per week, Hawg Dawgs now offers seven specials a day. The restaurant also has theme nights: Monday is all-you-can-eat spaghetti; Wednesday is steak night; Thursday is wing night; and Friday and Saturday are prime rib nights.

"Today's tacos have filet mignon, arugula, chipotle salsa and aioles," Menard said, a menu in his hand.

The menu will be updated in the coming weeks



Enterprise photo by Marc Lutz
Wendy Goode, who has worked at Hawg Dawg's Gourmet Dawgs in Valley Springs for three-and-a-half years, prepares to serve a burrito and hot dog to patrons of the eatery. "I like it. It's fun," Goode said of her job.

and Menard is especially excited about a new item called the Home Wrecker, where poutine meets hot dog. It's a half-pound of hot dog on a big bun, covered in two crumbled hamburger patties, fries, mozzarella cheese and gravy.

The restaurant also has a "puppy dog" menu, offering homemade biscuits and Bowser Beer, a

meat-based water for dogs.

"The (Bowser Beers) are really popular during the holidays; people buy it as stocking stuffers," Menard said. "I've had one customer go, 'I'm gonna try it,' and popped one open and he liked it."

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Community turns out for answers on fire insurance from Lara

By DAVIS HARPER
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More than 100 Calaveras County residents poured into the San Andreas Town Hall Monday to hear Ricardo Lara, the state insurance commissioner, detail his department's plans for addressing the fire insurance crisis. Fire coverage is getting increasingly harder to find and afford in Calaveras County and around the state, due to destructive wildfires in recent years.

Local county supervisors and staff were among the crowd, along with California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) and local fire district personnel for the fourth meeting on the insurance department's town hall tour of fire-prone counties

across the state.

Staff with the Insurance Department walked around with notepads to allow residents to write questions for Lara and other department representatives to be answered later in the meeting.

Lara presented statewide data regarding the loss of available insurance coverage in the fallout of large devastating fires over the past few years, along with a list of regulatory proposals the department has sent to the state Legislature.

"This is an issue that is continuing to grow in the state," Lara said. "We know the trickle-down effect of what happens when you cannot find insurance for your property. It devastates the real estate market, it devastates

the economic impact of our businesses ... and ultimately it ends up affecting evaluation of your property, which means less tax dollars for local governments, which again is already hindering low-income communities and counties."

Insurance companies issued 518 nonrenewals in Calaveras County last year, and that number will likely be higher for 2019, Lara said.

Part of the issue is that many insurance companies use a Fireline risk assessment model that scores the fire risk of a property based on its fuel load, slope and access via satellite imaging, he said.

According to Lara, the model is limited because it doesn't take into

account what homeowners have done to mitigate risks on their properties or their claims history.

Lara said that the Insurance Department doesn't have the authority currently to place more stringent requirements on insurance companies to ensure that they cover certain areas. An example would be requiring insurance providers to cover homeowners that have taken significant measures to mitigate risk around their homes. He is asking state lawmakers to give the department that authority.

"I'm telling you now, I'm prepared to go to court if I get sued from the insurance companies," Lara told community members. "I'm prepared to

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