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Mother Lode murderers' executions on hold after moratorium

By DAKOTA MORLAN
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Earlier this month, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed an executive order placing a moratorium on the death penalty in California, citing a morally unjust and "failed" system that discriminates against the mentally ill, the impoverished and racial minorities.

Although the order does not alter any existing convictions or sentences, the lethal injection chamber at San Quentin State Prison has been shut down, and the 25 death row inmates who have exhausted their appeals will no longer be eligible for an execution date during Newsom's term.

Since the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1978, the state of California has executed 13 inmates. The most recent execution was carried out in 2006.

With 737 inmates condemned to death, California's death row population is the largest in the nation. Calaveras County

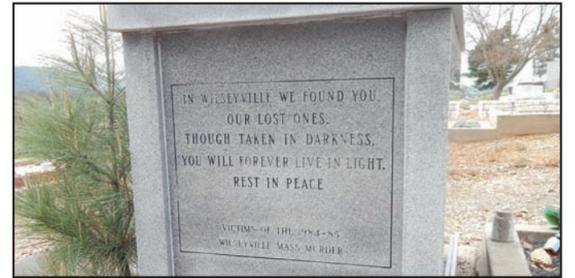
has produced some of the deadliest killers at San Quentin, with Wesley Shermantine, one of 81 inmates convicted of four or more killings, and Charles Ng – possibly the most prolific killer on death row – believed to have murdered as many as 25 men, women and children.

West Point property manager Sandy Maynard doesn't like to revisit the memory of her one-time tenants Lonnie Bond, Brenda O'Connor and their infant son, murdered by Ng and his accomplice, Leonard Lake. However, she doesn't mince her words when voicing her disapproval of the moratorium.

"I think we need the death penalty, and I think the governor is not acting in a way that the people support," Maynard told the Enterprise.

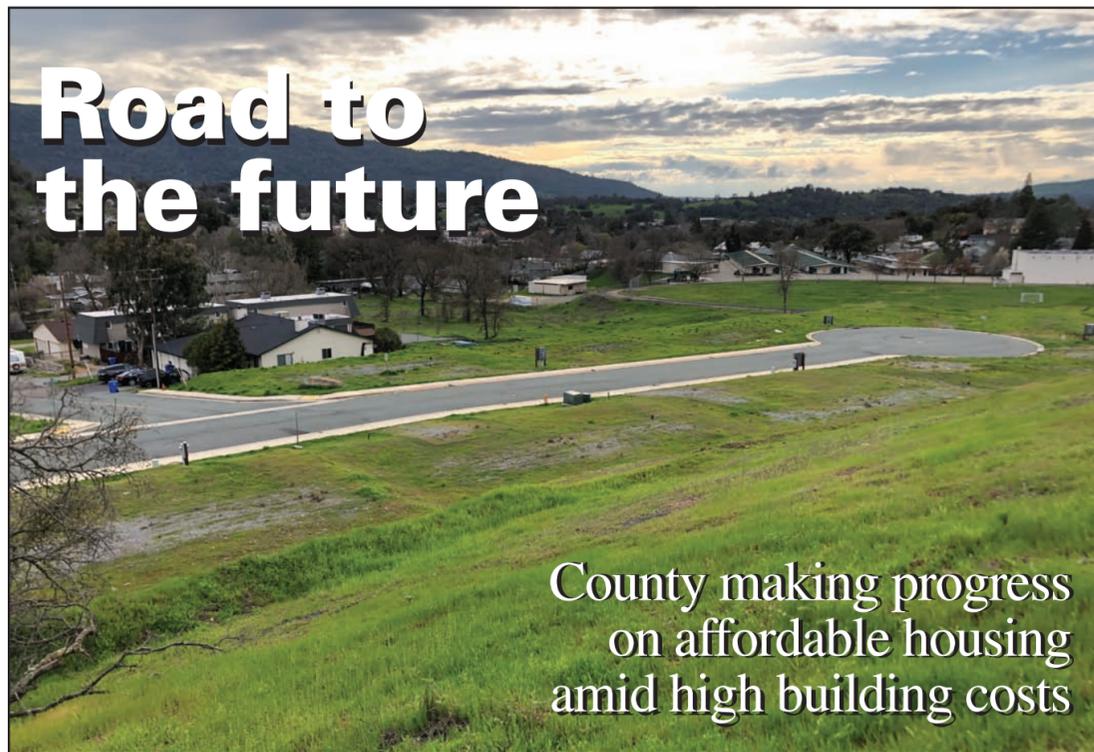
Here are the Mother Lode murderers who are currently on death row.

see **Death Row**, A9



Enterprise photo by Dakota Morlan

A memorial for the unidentified victims of Charles Ng and Leonard Lake at Peoples Cemetery in San Andreas. A mass grave was discovered at Lake's Wilseyville cabin in 1985, containing as many as 25 victims.



Road to the future

County making progress on affordable housing amid high building costs

Enterprise photos by Davis Harper

A site for an apartment project near San Andreas Elementary School is pictured. Located on the same property as the Federal Emergency Management Agency units that housed Butte Fire victims, the site was acquired by the Stanislaus Regional Housing Authority a year ago with the goal of building up more workforce housing in the community.

By DAVIS HARPER
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The 2019-2027 Calaveras County General Plan housing element update is up for public review, according to a Planning Department press release.

The state-mandated periodic update includes goals, policies and implementation programs to address availability, affordability and community needs pertaining to housing.

Based on the update, the county is facing a myriad of challenges.

The 2008 recession threw a wrench into construction plans countywide, and even with the county rebounding from the downturn, rising building costs over the past decade have compounded the issue, according to Planning Director Peter Maurer.

Less than 20 percent of homes destroyed in the 2015 Butte Fire have been rebuilt.

"We've got plenty of vacant land – the problem is that no one is building in the county," Maurer told the Enterprise in a March 21 phone interview. "The cost of construction (generally) exceeds rent



or sales value of what can be made for affordable housing projects."

High construction costs associated with state fire safety and energy conservation requirements present challenges for the county in attracting developers to invest.

Updated in 2008, building code requires

sprinkler installation in any new construction, which can cost thousands of dollars for homeowners, according to Economic Development Director Kathy Gallino.

"The developer won't eat that," Gallino said. "It has to be passed on to consumers."

see **Housing**, A9

Are fewer Mother Lode children getting vaccinated?

Case of measles in Calaveras County may be symptom of bigger problem

By DAKOTA MORLAN
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In light of the recent measles diagnosis of an unvaccinated child in Valley Springs, the Enterprise spoke with Calaveras County Public Health Officer Dr. Dean Kelaita to discuss a regional decline in local parents choosing to vaccinate their children.

In the fall of 2017, a mandatory statewide survey of kindergarteners carried out by the California Department of Health showed that the number of students who had received their required immunizations was 95.1 percent – a 4.7-percent increase from 2014.

However, Mother Lode counties saw a decrease in immunization rates from the previous year and presented some of the lowest percentages statewide.

Sutter County ranked the lowest in the state, with 78.2 percent of surveyed kindergarteners having received their immunizations. Calaveras County reported 88.1 percent – a 1.5-percent decrease from the previous year. Tuolumne and Amador counties also saw decreases, with ratings of 86.5 percent and 91.8 percent, respectively.

And the number of unvaccinated children could be even higher than what is shown in schoolwide surveys. According to Kelaita, recent legislation prohibiting immunization exemption due to personal beliefs may be pushing more parents to home-school their children.

"We do have a faction of parents that home-school in Calaveras County," Kelaita said.

He added that the majority of local parents opting out of vaccinations appeared to be of a higher socioeconomic status.

"We've seen that it's not so much income-related or that parents can't afford to go to the doctor," Kelaita said. "Rather, it's the opposite. Groups that are opposed to vaccinating

are, at many times, more affluent, and parents are declining based on thoughts that vaccines aren't safe."

The local "anti-vaxxer" crowd has a vocal presence on social media, with some coming forward to comment on the recent measles diagnosis.

"I'm 66 and in my day before the Man Made 'Propaganda' Machine cranked out all this bull getting measles was a normal part of growing up," wrote Facebook user Leticia Delgadillo on an Enterprise article post. "Mother Nature and our incredible immune system She gave us is billions of years ahead in its Genius compared to these money making dead Corpe-orations [sic] ...Wake Up! Such nonsense putting TOXIC poison in your children [sic]"

Delgadillo and other anti-vaccination proponents did not respond to interview requests from the Enterprise by deadline.

Weighing the risks

Since the advent of vaccinations, there have been those who have opposed them due to religious beliefs or concerns about adverse health effects. And some claims have carried more weight than others.

In 2006, California outlawed the use of mercury-containing vaccines on pregnant women and children under the age of 3.

Controversy has also surrounded the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, a two-dose immunization that is one of five required for all kindergartens through 12th-graders attending school in California.

In the late '90s, a medical journal called The Lancet published work by British doctor Andrew Wakefield arguing

see **Vaccines**, A9

Public Works lays out \$14.6M plan for Butte Fire road repairs

By DAKOTA MORLAN
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Calaveras County Director of Public Works and Transportation Joshua Pack presented a tentative three-year plan for the repair of roads impacted by the Butte Fire at a Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday.

The plan will be funded by the \$25.4 million settlement the county received last year from the Pacific Gas & Electric Co., which was found responsible for the 2015 fire. Next month, the

board will vote on a plan to utilize the \$20.2 million at its disposal after legal fees were subtracted.

At a previous meeting, Supervisor Jack Garamendi proposed that nearly three-quarters of that amount be designated to Public Works for road repairs.

Pack's \$14.6 million proposal was well-received during the March 26 meeting. The plan recommended the repair and repaving of at least 24 county road segments that are within the Butte Fire burn

scar or were damaged by emergency access use.

Based on a list compiled shortly after the fire, some of the top priority roads are Mountain Ranch, Sheep Ranch, Railroad Flat and Jesus Maria.

Pack estimated that roughly 70 percent of the work would be contracted out, including the \$9 million allotted for construction. He also recommended the hiring of up to eight seasonal employees, totalling \$750,000, in order to prevent the disruption of other Public Works services.

Additionally, the proposed budget includes funding for equipment purchases, prep work such as clearing culverts and trees, construction management, engineering and inspection support, subtotalling \$13.3 million with a 10 percent contingency for variances, unexpected repairs and escalation of costs.

Pack emphasized that the plan does not include any significant engineering or construction of new paved roads, but rather restores affected

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