

the sheet

News, Views & Culture of the Eastern Sierra

Saturday, November 1, 2025

FREE

Vol. 23, No. 44

(NOT) COOL FOR CATS

Mountain lion activity vexes Big Pine residents

By Libre

Two weeks ago, The Sheet received an anonymous tip from a Big Pine resident, asking us to do a story.

"Can you guys please do an article on the mountain lion problem we have in the town of Big Pine, it's out of control," the tip said. "We have made numerous reports to our worthless fish and game and they aren't doing anything. Please help us."

Hungry for more information, I posted a note on a Big Pine Facebook page asking if anyone had information. Immediately, responses began to flow into my inbox. Security camera footage depicted mountain lions on top of resident's cars and slinking through backyards.

"We lost our two cats a couple months ago," one user wrote. "We're certain that they were taken by mountain lions."

"We feel like we're being stalked," replied another.

In the beginning of October, a mountain lion grabbed Gerard Harvey's 15-pound dog by the neck while his pet was walking with his wife. The lion ran into their fence and "the dog went flying," Harvey told The Sheet. A few vet bills later, the dog is now okay.

Despite the fear these cats are sowing in the people of Big Pine, their behavior is not abnormal, Beth Pratt told The Sheet. Pratt is the Regional Executive Director of California's National Wildlife Federation; her work centers on co-existence between mountain lions and people in urban areas.

"Mountain lions have always walked through our backyards and they've always preyed on our pets and our livestock," Pratt said. "It's just that now we have security cameras and social media to share these stories."

There is no evidence mountain lion populations are

growing in California, Pratt added. She described them as an extremely "self-regulating species," meaning they will not share territory. "They are not an animal that is going to over-populate."

There are 65 mountain lions currently collared by fish and game in the Eastern Sierra, according to local herd biologist Brian Tillemans. But there are many more that are not collared.

It's unclear how many mountain lions are currently in Big Pine. "[It's] a pretty closely held number by California

Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)," said Jen Roeser, Inyo County Supervisor, in an interview with The Sheet.

Mountain lions have a pretty significant range, she added. "There are other places other than Big Pine that are being affected."

Roeser pointed to Round Valley, Hammil, Chalfant, Lone Pine, and Bishop as other communities in Inyo and Mono who have been impacted by mountain lion activity.

Tillemans raised a different concern: the local mule deer

see LIONS, pg. 6

AN OOMPA LOOMPA SHOW



Bishop Strings, led by Rebecca Hang and Brian Schualt of the Felici Trio, held a Halloween concert after school Wednesday at Home Street Middle School. Lunch loved the Oompa Loompa as well as the student at left's unique footwork. The Felici Trio are in concert weekend, see ad p.6



The High Sierra Energy Foundation celebrated its 20th anniversary at The Brasserie in Mammoth on Tuesday. Pictured are original HSEF Exec. Director Rick Phelps and his successor Pam Bold.

RATSO RIZO

Inyo Judge taken to task by Judicial Commission
Compiled by Staff

Inyo County Superior Court Judge Susanne M. Rizo was admonished by the State's Commission on Judicial Performance in a scathing 13-page report released on Wednesday.

The Commission found "Judge Rizo failed to cooperate with court administrators and the presiding judge, spoke about litigants and their pending cases in an area of the courthouse where she could be overheard, improperly dismissed a case, and made a probable cause determination concerning a litigant from whose cases she was disqualified."

The admonishment was initially issued in July, then appealed before the Commission by Rizo on October 8.

What follows is the report.

1. Failure to Cooperate with Court Administrators and the Presiding Judge

Judge Rizo failed to cooperate with court administrators and the court's presiding judge by: A) reporting two court administrators to the State Bar alleging that they were engaging in the "unauthorized practice of law" and asserting that the presiding judge "aided and abetted" them, and B) responding to routine scheduling communications in a volatile and disproportionate manner, as set forth below.

A. State Bar Reports

On July 5, 2024, Judge Rizo filed two complaints with the State Bar of California, alleging that Court Executive Officer Pamela Foster and Court Operations Manager Lindsay Eropkin were engaged in the unauthor-

ized practice of law. She also alleged that Presiding Judge Stephen Place was "aiding and abetting" the unauthorized practice of law by these employees. Presiding Judge Place is the only other judge in Inyo county's two-judge court.

Judge Rizo asserted that Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin had opposed her "legal directives" regarding the court's obligation to provide notice in probate guardianship cases involving the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). Judge Rizo stated that Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin challenged her interpretation of statutes and opposed her opinions in a manner that constituted the unauthorized practice of law.

On August 7, 2024, Judge Rizo supplemented her complaint to the State Bar. She recounted a series of communications, between September 2022 and May 2024, in which she and Ms. Eropkin and/or Ms. Foster discussed issues of court procedure, notice, and calendaring. Judge Rizo stated to the State Bar, "If it is found that unlawful practice of law is occurring[,] I hope the individuals involved are prosecuted to the fullest extent."

The unauthorized practice of law violates section 6125 of the Business and Professions Code and is a misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

The State Bar closed Judge Rizo's complaint on August 28, 2024, finding that the evidence was insufficient to establish that Ms. Eropkin or Ms. Foster were engaged in the unauthorized practice of law.

In her response to the commission's preliminary

more RIZO, see pg. 8

A Frame Goes Down

Getting SHARP

No Kings Duped

Not FAIRing So Well

Spit on That Thang!

p. 4/

p. 5/

p. 6/

p. 6/

p. 2/

HAWKTUA

It's quaint, really. The World Series going on - baseball once having claimed title to being the "national pastime."

When it's clear what America's national pastime really is: shopping.

That truth was on display Thursday morning as the new Marshalls in Bishop opened its doors. I swung by at around 11 a.m. Thursday to take a look. The mall parking lot was full - a first since I moved here 25 years ago. And there was a DJ by the front door blasting Journey's "Don't Stop Believin' (in shopping)."

Inside, all six registers were occupied (with about 15 blue-shirted staffers bustling about - just in the register area alone). Then there were about 70 customers waiting in line, a line that snaked to the back of the store.

All I could think in my overwhelm was 'holy hell.' And then promptly fled.

On Monday, I drew the short straw and attended the first meeting of Mammoth's Park and Recreation Master Plan Committee.

The Town is updating its last Master Plan, which was adopted in 2012.

Of course, a consultant was hired for the task, the firm boasting the unfortunate acronym of KTUA.

KTUA announced it is embarking on a 15-month planning process which will include pop-up booths and workshops and surveys ... and all the strategy and catchphrases associated with public outreach.

The Town will pay KTUA \$300,000 to hawk, er, develop this plan.

Most of the meeting was spent fretting about how to reach various communities for proper feedback.

I texted Town Manager Rob Patterson during the meeting and said, "15 months? Are we planning a lunar landing?"

I've never understood why it is the Town's fault/concern if the public doesn't respond to a reasonable number of requests for feedback.

I would've cut the outreach events by two-thirds and the contract by two-thirds and enlisted a gregarious person with a clipboard to walk around town for a few weeks and talk to people.

But I guess that careens a bit too close to actual, you know, effort.

MHS Football Coach Dale Knott submitted the following this week:
The computer rankings on Max preps have us #1 in the central section, #

the
sheet

News, Views & Culture of the Eastern Sierra

"It's a dog-eat-dog world, Sammy, and I'm wearing Milk Bone underwear."

-Norm (Cheers)

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3 in the state! Hopefully the human CIF will follow suit as long as we get the win this Thursday vs. 9-0 Immanuel Christian in Ridgecrest (it's for our Hi/Lo league championship as well)! Immanuel has really turned it around - last season they didn't win a game.

An interesting factoid is that the only team Mammoth has lost to is Stuart Hall (San Francisco).

Stuart Hall was profiled in the San Francisco Chronicle this week because it is undefeated and has outscored opponents 313-12 this season.

Those 12 points were scored by Mammoth.

Stuart Hall has 38 players on its roster and will play 11-man starting next year.

And from Klusmire's desk ...

The snide political aside of the week came from Bishop City Councilmember Stephen Muchovej during the discussion about the ill-fated A Frame. Regarding suggestions that the public could start a fundraising campaign to help cover costs to repair the building, he said maybe some citizens would want to donate money to build a ballroom on the site. Audible groans and muttering came from the Trump fans in the audience.

The same discussion yielded six words of wisdom that all elected officials should memorize. As the chat started to meander, Councilmember Jose Garcia stated emphatically, "We were elected to make decisions."

INYO Faces the music

This was the preface to the INYO350 presser about getting scammed by a Democratic influencer impersonator - though to be honest, Lunch knows as much about Dan Pfeiffer as he knew about Charlie Kirk.

"We realize that this news will probably be met with quite different reactions from our followers than from those who don't agree with our local work for the environment, social justice, and democracy. We also realize that we could have kept the fact of this scam completely hidden—and not exposed ourselves to criticism or ridicule by revealing it.

The Board of INYO350, which is composed entirely of local volunteer community members, agreed that the right thing to do was not to hide the facts, but to come forward with the details of the fraud. We are doing this for two reasons. First, we highly value honesty and transparency. And second, we want to alert our fellow community members (regardless of party or politics) that, unfortunately, scammers abound, and we should all always be on our guard to not fall prey to them."



Libre attended Jeff Griffiths' fourth annual "Halloweezer" event on Saturday, a fundraiser for the Eastside Student Center in Bishop.

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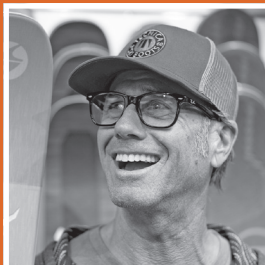
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RYAN SELIGMAN



DEAN WOLFE

LOCAL NEWS

ON BORROWED TIME

By Klusmire

The Bishop City Council made a dollars and sense decision Monday night to demolish the A Frame building that formerly housed the Bishop Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Center.

The estimated cost to demolish the building, which the city owns, was about \$150,000, according to a report from Pam Foster, city manager. Demolishing the building and erecting a new building would cost at least \$1 million, the report noted. A partial demolition effort that would leave the A Frame section but remove the south additions, about 85% of the building, would likely cost more than complete demolition due to the complexity of the work and need for extensive renovation of the remaining structure.

The report also made clear there is no money in the city budget for the demolition work or a new building.

The council concluded it had more pressing priorities for the city's limited funds than trying to salvage a small, vacant building.

"I was astonished at how bad a shape the A Frame was in, said Councilmember Dennis Freundt. He acknowledged many residents have a "sentimental" feel for the 50-year-old structure. "But I was

elected to protect the whole town, not one building," he said. Demolishing the building is "the emotionally wrong decision, but the financially right decision."

If it comes down to paying \$1 million for the A Frame or \$1 million for a fire truck, "I'm buying the fire truck," said Councilmember Stephen Muchovej. The council is tasked with "being the stewards of taxpayer's money" and its first priority is public safety, he said. It "makes no sense" to spend \$1 million on the building when the city's yearly total capital improvement budget is usually between \$1 and \$2 million a year. The "reality" is the city doesn't have the money for a new building, he said.

Mayor Karen Kong said the heated public comment at previous council meetings might have given the impression of broad public support to keep or renovate the A Frame. But that's not necessarily the case. She said she had talked with numerous residents far more concerned about "sidewalks, roads, street flooding who have urged us not to do this (put money into the A Frame)."

The fate of the A Frame has been a heated topic since the city evicted the chamber this fall and an engineering report detailed critical structural issues that made the second floor and

the south additions unsafe to occupy. Chamber staff has vacated those sections of the building. The chamber is in the process of moving into its new building, which it purchased, on south Main Street. The A Frame will be completely vacant when the current visitor center operation moves to the new building on Nov. 12.

Six supporters of keeping and renovating the A Frame repeated talking points Monday from previous meetings. They questioned the cost estimates and the reliability of the engineering report, said the building was historic and iconic, and it was the perfect location for the chamber and visitor center, being on a corner of the City Park across from Schat's Bakery. They suggested using donations or grants to fund repairs and urged the city to renovate the A Frame in the hopes the chamber would once again operate its visitor center in the building.

During the months of debate over the A Frame the chamber has maintained its silence on the issue. It has never indicated it wants to keep staff in the A Frame or would return staff to a renovated A Frame building. Chamber CEO Tawni Thompson gave two presentations on Monday night about the chamber's marketing programs. She didn't men-

tion the A Frame except to say it would be completely vacated by Nov. 12.

When the council knocked around ideas about delaying a decision or making more detailed plans for the building and the park in general, Councilmember Jose Garcia pushed for a decision.

"We were elected to make decisions," he said.

The council and chamber have discussed the fate of the building for years, and the longer a decision is delayed the more expensive any option will be, said Garcia. Building on the site is not an option because it's a small slice of land on the banks of the South Fork of Bishop Creek, which runs through the park.

"It's fantasy land" to renovate the building and hope the chamber would move back in, said Councilmember Karen Schwartz.

"I don't see any other way around tearing it down," Kong concluded.

Staff was directed to begin the process to demolish the building. It could take up to a year to obtain numerous permits from state agencies and complete a state-mandated Environmental Impact Report. Those steps could cost up to \$50,000, staff reported. Then the city will solicit bids for the demolition.



LET'S TALK TURKEY



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SWEET SIXTEEN

By Fisher

Good things take time. Great things, apparently, take 16 years, extensive environmental review, a mini excavator, and seven people with shovels.

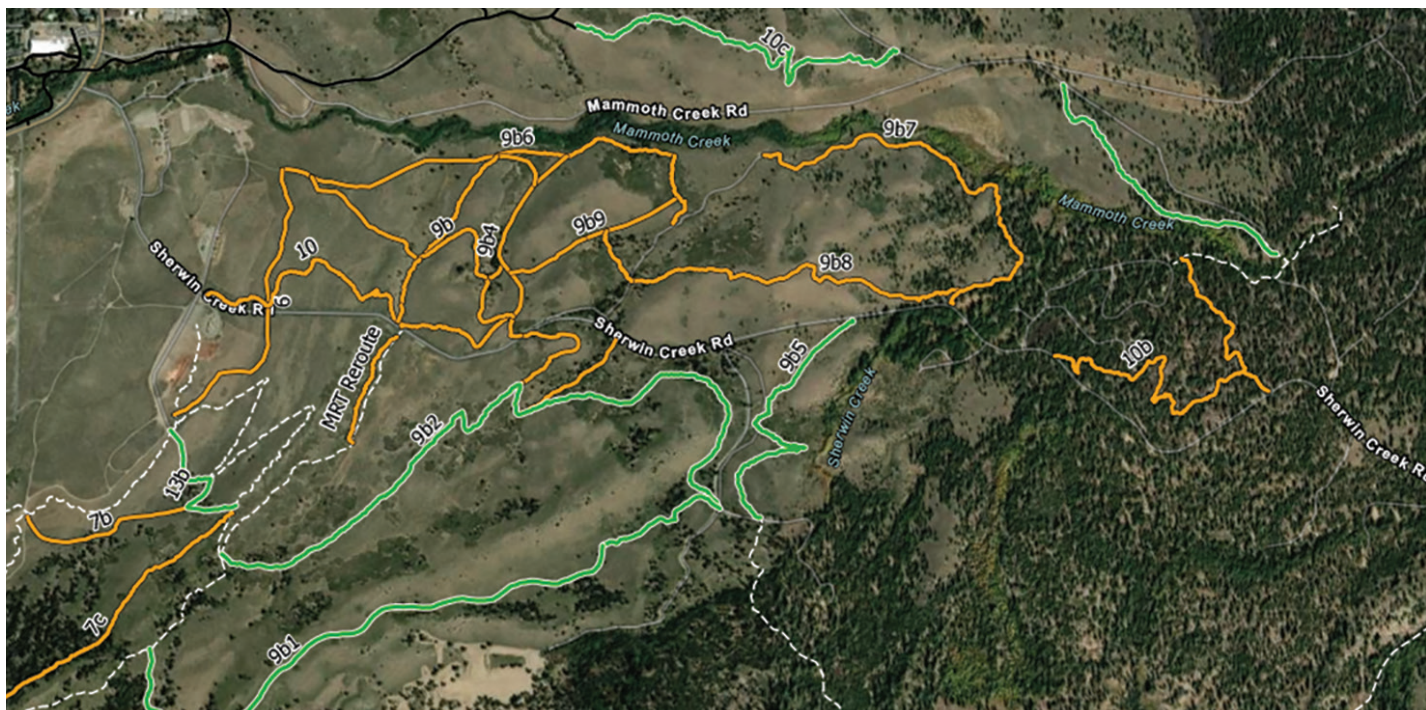
Over the summer, the Town of Mammoth Lakes trail crew built five new trails in the Sherwin Area, totaling roughly five miles, said the Town's Trail Program Director, Andrew Mulford, in a presentation to the public Wednesday night at the Eatery at Mammoth Brewing. Next year, the crew expects to complete another eight miles of trail.

This work represents the latest phase of the Sherwin Area Recreation Project (SHARP), a long-winded project to expand and organize the trail system which spans from Hayden Cabin to the end of Old Mammoth Road.

Some of the 13 miles of trail in development are user-created routes that already existed but couldn't be maintained because the USFS didn't officially recognize them. By reworking and adopting them into the Town's network, officials hope to transform the region's spiderweb of paths into maintainable single-track for cyclists, hikers, and equestrians.

For the time being, the Town isn't publicizing the new routes to allow the arid dirt to settle, but they are walkable, and Mulford said winter snow will help to pack the dusty paths down.

"A lot of people come here and say, 'man, the soil's not great,' but if you get on trails that have been there a while,



A map of the trails in development under the most recent phase of SHARP. The trails highlighted green indicate the trails completed this year, and the trails highlighted orange are slated for completion next year. White-dotted trails are existing USFS trails.

like the Mammoth Rock Trail or the Mountain View Trail, they pack in eventually and become quite fun," he said.

Attendees of the meeting were asked to suggest names for the new trails, jotting them down on maps of the area. "Please just try to avoid the word 'connector,'" Mulford mused, anxious not to introduce a fourth trail with that descriptor in the area — and definitely not a fourth, a fifth, or a sixth.

Looking ahead, Mulford said another

phase of the project is now taking shape to add trails that didn't make it through the most recent environmental review. This additional phase is "one step back" for the planners, he said, but a necessary one.

“[The trails] either have some archaeological issues or some interactions with whitebark pine or hydrology that made the environmental review process a little more tedious and time-consuming,” he said.

These plans are now subject to another, more extensive review with archaeologists, biologists, and other specialists from the Inyo National Forest. And there's no telling how long it will take.

"We should receive approval, but it just takes a lot of time, and well, money," Mulford said. "But we think it's important, and there's really no other option. The other option would be to pretend they don't exist."

more SHARP, page 13

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LIONS
continued from page 1

and bighorn sheep populations.

“The lion predation has the biggest impact on the mule deer and the endangered bighorn,” he said. “We are right on the cusp of a predator pit.”

What is a predator a pit? In this case, It’s when the mountain lion predation rate creates a positive feedback loop, rendering the deer population unrecoverable, Tillemans said. “After that, the [deer] population starts spiraling.”

Currently, mountain lions are regulated by Prop 117, a piece of legislation passed by California voters in 1990. This law established mountain lions as a protected species, and prohibited hunting the animals, except when livestock or public safety is threatened, in which case a landowner can get a depredation permit from CDFW to kill a specific mountain lion.

“Sacramento has got to return the control of lions to our local biologists and experts,” Roeser said. “Right now, decisions about what to do with the lions are being forwarded up the chain of command. And that’s just not an effective way to deal with predators who have been habituated.”

Roeser believes a voter-driven policy change from the Prop 117 status quo could be a possible solution to the mountain lion problem. A local control policy would allow the local biologists in each CDFW region to make decisions such as relocating mountain lions, rather than that decision coming from the capital, she furthered.

“But honestly, I don’t think we’re

there,” she said. “We are navigating a difficult political situation.”

Tillemans’ solution was more extreme.

“I’ve been advocating that we euthanize them,” he said. “Give the deer and the bighorn a break.”

He didn’t necessarily mean all of the mountain lions in the Eastern Sierra, but the ones who were specifically eating the endangered Sierra bighorn.

“What I hope happens in situations like these is education,” Pratt countered. “When we focus on scientific based co-existence measures, a lot of the fear goes away.”

Co-existence entails keeping pets and food sources inside at night, minimizing the possibility of drawing a mountain lion to one’s home, Pratt explained. When you’re walking your dog at night, it’s important to keep them on a leash, she added.

“Don’t fear these cats, but respect them,” she said. “You are in way more danger from your step ladder.”

Roeser encouraged Big Pine (and other affected) residents to call the new CDFW hotline for when they encounter mountain lions. The hotline was established specifically for wildlife conflict and is only for Inyo and Mono counties. The number is 559-550-7060.

The number is new, but Roeser has faith it will prompt action from CDFW.

“Our hope is that someone will show up,” she said.

INYO350 TAKEN FOR A RIDE
Press Release

INYO350, local advocacy coalition, has informed the community it was the victim of a scam.

The local non-profit had been duped into believing that, for the past several weeks, it had been in contact with nationally known political podcaster Dan Pfeiffer, and that he would be visiting the area and speaking at the No Kings 2.0 rally in Bishop on Saturday, October 18.

Turns out it was a scammer pretending to be Pfeiffer.

What happened has many of the hallmarks of a “classic scam.” First, the group was contacted by someone claiming (and seeming) to be the real Dan Pfeiffer. That first contact came through a WhatsApp message. Next, after a brief period of back-and-forth communications, “Dan” accepted an invitation to speak at the No Kings 2.0 event in Bishop and agreed to discount his usual speaker fee if the group paid him at once to lock in the date on his calendar. Third, as communications continued, he provided a bio and headshot for use in publicity, while at the same time warmly complimenting the organization’s resistance efforts and organizing strategies.

As the seeming partnership with “Dan” evolved, additional plans for his visit here were made, including a field trip to the area. All planning and communications seemed to be going well until “Dan” contacted INYO350 Saturday morning saying he was ill and would not be able to speak at the rally.

Since last weekend, the organizers realized they were never in touch with the actual Dan Pfeiffer and that the whole thing was a scam. They learned the hard way that they failed to notice so many of the typical signs of a scam, including that scammers will: 1) contact you “out of the blue” and make an offer that is “too good to be true,” 2) create a sense of urgency to get you to act quickly 3) keep you communicating with them via an online platform, such as WhatsApp, and not engage with you via a video call (or Zoom meeting), 4) provide information that makes them seem credible, and 5) lead you to believe that you are developing a connection and relationship with them.

“If this scam had political motivations, there is an irony in that,” Fran Hunt, INYO350 board member, stated. “Because we thought we were bringing the real Dan Pfeiffer to town that we realized we needed additional fundraising efforts to step up our ongoing resistance efforts in our local communities.”

In fact, the organization raised several times the amount it was swindled out of (Ed. note: said to be \$2,000). These generous community donations will expand INYO350’s resistance work in the Eastern Sierra in significant ways, allowing organizers to plan and promote future marches and rallies, community meetings, campaign forums, trainings, and to increasingly mobilize our community on behalf of democracy, the environment, public lands, immigrant neighbors, and more.

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through
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LOCAL BRIEFS

At A Crossroads

Inyo County will provide opioid re-mediation services through Crossroads Recovery Center, a Bishop-based facility that offers a wide range of services and programs to help people struggling with substance abuse.

The county Health and Human Services Department earlier this year issued a Request for Proposals for services to mitigate the impacts of opioid abuse in Inyo County, and Crossroads was selected as the winning respondent.

The Board of Supervisors recently approved a \$100,000 contract with Crossroads to run a multi-pronged initiative aimed at providing both urgent life-saving overdose prevention and response, and long-term community healing. The center's proposal included buying a mobile harm reduction unit, providing residential recovery options, purchasing supplies for a youth prevention pop-up house, and opening a facilitated recovery "hangout center."

The contract is covered by opioid remediation funding that local jurisdictions such as Inyo County receive as part of nationwide settlements and class action lawsuits against pharmaceutical manufacturers, distributors and retailers that contributed to the opioid crisis. Inyo County will continue to receive funding as additional settlements are negotiated and funds are distributed to local jurisdictions.

A Pretty Fair Fair

The 2025 Tri-County Fair won ribbons for attendance and cash flow.

About 25,000 people attended this year's fair, which was about 1,000 more than the 2024 edition, said Mike Francesconi, interim fair director, during a Oct. 27 report to the Bishop City Council.

The county music concert featuring Josh Turner drew one of the largest concert crowds in recent fair history, with about 1,800 catching the show. The Latin Concert brought in about 1,200 people, he noted.

A sellout crowd of 3,700 watched the series of rolling car wrecks and near misses that make up the Demolition Derby, the fair's signature event. The derby is a fundraiser for the Bishop Fire Department. The department can expect to receive a check for \$44,000 from the event, he said.

After losing \$345,000 in 2024, the Tri-County Fairgrounds is \$240,000 in the black after nine months of operations, Francesconi said. Eliminating the money-losing spring and fall concerts helped the bottom line.

"Sometimes you have more profit with fewer events," he quipped. Having the state, not the fairgrounds, pay his salary also helped.

Next up, he said, is finding and confirming additional board members and making plans to hire a full-time fair director.

Fatality on Mt. Whitney

A joint operation by Inyo and Mono Search and Rescue (SAR) teams successfully completed a complex body recovery mission on Mt. Whitney.

Inyo County SAR was contacted on Saturday, Oct. 25 at 1 p.m. with a report of a possible fatality on Mt. Whitney in the area known as the 99 Switchbacks off the Main Trail. A hiker had fallen from the trail and off a cliff. Inyo SAR assembled three rescuers who met CHP Helicopter H-80 from Apple Valley at the Lone Pine Airport at 3:30 p.m. High winds prevented the helicopter from approaching the subject's location, and the recovery was postponed.

On Sunday, Oct. 26, the fatality was confirmed. Several rescuers from Mono County SAR hiked approximately seven miles to the decedent's location. They prepared and lowered the decedent to a more accessible area. However, due to high winds, evacuation of the decedent was postponed.

On Monday, October 27, weather conditions improved and H-80 succeeded in reaching the access point. With the assistance of three Inyo SAR rescuers, the decedent was safely evacuated.

Mount Whitney is already experiencing winter conditions, including snow and ice, very low temperatures and frequent windstorms, according to Inyo SAR. The Main Trail is no longer a casual hike but a mountaineering endeavor. The 99 Switchbacks are espe-

cially icy and slippery and should not be attempted without proper equipment, experience and preparation.

Mono County Finance Director Retires

Following nearly a decade of distinguished public service, Finance Director, Janet Dutcher, is retiring. Leslie Chapman, formerly retired Mono Finance Director and CAO and Inyo County CAO, is now double-dipping as the Interim Finance Director.

Dutcher started serving as the Director of Finance for Mono County in 2016. Her leadership focused on implementing solid accounting practices that emphasized transparency and accountability, notably through her expertise in target-based budgeting, which was pivotal in fostering financial resilience within the County's Board.

Under her direction, the department made significant strides in integrating technology, including the early stages of implementing a new enterprise resource planning system and advocating for increased automation through artificial intelligence tools.

Her exceptional contributions to the financial services sector did not go unnoticed, as evidenced by her recent recognition as "Top Finance Director of the Year" by the International Association of Top Professionals (IAOTP).



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RIZO
continued from page 1

investigation letter, Judge Rizo acknowledged that she filed complaints about Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin with the State Bar, and told the State Bar the presiding judge was “aiding and abetting” the unauthorized practice of law by these court employees, and that she hoped the individuals involved were “prosecuted to the fullest extent.”

Judge Rizo asserted that she submitted her complaint “as a member of the public,” noting that the State Bar has some jurisdiction over the unauthorized practice of law.

More than six weeks before Judge Rizo filed her complaint with the State Bar, Ms. Eropkin had agreed to work to modify the court’s procedure for providing notice in probate guardianship cases involving ICWA and to notify the clerks of the change. Court staff had also taken steps to address other issues Judge Rizo raised in her complaint to the State Bar. At Judge Rizo’s request, the court modified procedures for handling continuances in traffic infractions.

After initially holding a number of Judge Rizo’s rulings dismissing traffic citations, the court issued the dismissals. While acknowledging these facts, Judge Rizo asserted in her response that the issue of notice to tribes in certain proceedings “did not timely resolve as promised.” She also stated that the delayed issuance of her dismissal of multiple traffic citations did not resolve her concern that court managers were engaging in a “pattern and practice of the unlawful practice of law.” (Emphasis in original.)

In her objections, Judge Rizo continued to deny any misconduct related to her complaints to the State Bar, insisted she had made the referral in good faith, and asserted that she had no other recourse because Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin refused to follow her directions.

The communications between Judge Rizo and Ms. Foster do not, however,

support such a contention. Rather, the communications reflect that, while Ms. Foster may have disagreed with some of Judge Rizo’s suggestions to change court policies or procedures, and engaged in some back-and-forth discussions with the judge, Ms. Foster ultimately followed Judge Rizo’s direction, with modifications to correct for issues Judge Rizo initially misunderstood.

The commission further concluded that Judge Rizo filed the complaints without a good faith basis and that there was no colorable argument that Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin were practicing law ... Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin were not representing clients, providing legal advice, or drafting legal instruments for clients, but rather, were assisting Judge Rizo with her judicial duties and ensuring that the court, including its judges and its clerks, adhered to the law and court procedures.

Ms. Foster, as the Court Executive Officer, had the responsibility for “overseeing the management and administration of the nonjudicial operations of the court and allocating resources in a manner that promotes access to justice for all members of the public, provid[ing] a forum for the fair and expeditious resolution of disputes, maximiz[ing]

the use of judicial and other resources, increas[ing] efficiency in court operations, and enhanc[ing] service to the public.”

Ms. Foster, and her staff, including Ms. Eropkin, were required to interpret and apply relative codes and statutes to ensure the court was processing cases in accordance with the law and ensure the court’s administrative policies and procedures were applied consistently and fairly. Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin’s disagreement with Judge Rizo, or engaging in discussions regarding court procedures with her, cannot be deemed to be practicing law within any reason-

“
A judge needs to know the limits on his or her authority regarding staff ... and the rules regarding a judge’s conduct toward staff.

- Commission on
Judicial Performance

”



Inyo County Superior Court Judge Susanne Rizo, in a photograph from January, 2021 on the day she was sworn in.

able meaning of the term.

As Judge Rothman observes in the Judicial Conduct Handbook: Even though the judge is responsible for managing the courtroom, staff members are employed by the court, not the judge. They have obligations and a chain of command outside and independent of judicial control, desire, or authority. A judge needs to know the limits on his or her authority regarding staff, including the limits on a judge’s power to give direction to staff, and the rules regarding a judge’s conduct toward staff.

The commission further found that Judge Rizo’s conduct in filing these complaints gave the appearance that she was retaliating against Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin for bringing attention to mistakes Judge Rizo made, submitting complaints about Judge Rizo, and, in the case of Ms. Foster, participating in obtaining an outside investigation of complaints against Judge Rizo.

Judge Rizo’s conduct constituted a failure to maintain professional competence in judicial administration and cooperate with other judges and court officials in the administration of court business (canon 3C(2)); diligently discharge administrative responsibilities impartially and in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary (canon 3C(1)); maintain and uphold high standards of conduct (canon 1); avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety (canon 2); and act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary (canon 2A).

B. Request for Leave

On June 3, 2024, Judge Rizo informed Ms. Foster and Presiding Judge Place by email that she had a medical appointment on June 18, 2024. She apologized for the inconvenience and proposed that some of the cases on her calendar be moved to another date.

In response, Ms. Foster replied that moving the calendar was “problematic.” She said that she would try to find another judge to cover the calendar, noting that it was only two weeks away. She added, “[I]f we can’t find someone

we can talk about other options.”

That evening, Judge Rizo informed Presiding Judge Place and Ms. Foster by email that she was on a waitlist for the appointment and so, her need for coverage could change. Approximately 15 minutes later, Judge Rizo emailed Presiding Judge Place and informed him that she believed her medical concerns were being treated differently than his; she suggested that he “open an investigation.” She stated, “I am have [sic] been and continue to be treated differently by administration based on my sex different [sic] from any other judge in our court I believe. [Sic.] I would hope you share my concern as it seems when you have had surgeries it goes without group emails calling into question the ‘problematic’ nature of your medical needs.”

The following morning, Ms. Foster informed Judge Rizo by email that she had found a judge to cover Judge Rizo’s calendar on June 18 and said she hoped Judge Rizo’s doctor would be able to find an appointment for her. Ten minutes later, Judge Rizo informed Presiding Judge Place that she was retaining legal counsel and that any further emails would have legal counsel copied.

In her response to the commission’s preliminary investigation letter, which alleged that Judge Rizo’s response to Ms. Foster’s email was volatile and disproportionate, Judge Rizo asserted that, on previous occasions, Presiding Judge Place did not honor her requests to take medical leave, rather than vacation leave, for medical appointments that required her to travel out of the area. She asserted that, in contrast, Presiding Judge Place had taken lengthy leaves for medical reasons. Regardless of any such history, the subject of the conversation described above was how to cover Judge Rizo’s cases in the event that she could not be present in court due to a medical appointment.

In her objections, Judge Rizo acknowledged that she “should have taken a different approach” in her communications regarding her request for leave.

The commission concluded that Judge Rizo’s response to Ms. Foster’s statement that moving the calendar was “problematic” was volatile and disproportionate, and reflected a failure to cooperate with Ms. Foster and Presiding Judge Place in the administration of court business.

... The commission concluded that Judge Rizo’s conduct constituted a failure to cooperate with other judges and court officials in the administration of court business, in violation of canon 3C(2), and also violated canons 1, 2, and 2A.

2. Comments about Litigants and Cases

Judge Rizo made improper comments in the clerks’ area of the courthouse about litigants and their pending cases, as discussed below.

A. Emisa Rinkevich v. Ocean Hyles

On January 26, 2024, Judge Rizo presided over a hearing in Emisa Rinkevich v. Ocean Hyles concerning the mother’s reports that, after she agreed
more RIZO, pg. 9

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to allow the parties' child to have an overnight visit with the father, the father refused to return the child.

Reportedly, the father had recently started visitation, after a seven-year absence.

After the hearing, Judge Rizo entered the clerks' area and engaged in a conversation with court staff about the case. Describing this conversation, Judge Rizo reported that she "expressed her distress and compassion for the petitioner's situation to the clerks."

The mother (petitioner), who was outside the clerk's office and out of Judge Rizo's sight, overheard the conversation and started to cry. As Judge Rizo was speaking, the mother entered the clerk's office and asked for help. Judge Rizo was concerned that the mother heard the remarks she made to the clerks and said that she would recuse herself from the case. As the mother continued asking for help, Judge Rizo said she could not give the mother legal advice and repeated that she was going to recuse herself. In her response to the commission's preliminary investigation letter, Judge Rizo said she believed that, during this exchange, she told the mother that, if she wanted to speak to someone, she could reach out to the sheriff's department. As a result of this interaction, the judge disqualified herself from Rinkevich v. Hyles.

The commission found that Judge Rizo's conduct in speaking about Rinkevich v. Hyles with the clerks in a manner that was overheard by one of the litigants, and that resulted in the judge's recusal, constituted a failure to perform the duties of judicial office impartially, competently, and diligently, in violation of canon 3; and to act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary, in violation of canon 2A. The commission further found that the judge's conduct in speaking directly with Ms. Rinkevich in the clerk's office, including telling her that she could reach out to law enforcement officers, constituted an improper ex parte communication, in violation of canon 3B(7), and gave an appearance of bias.

B. Ginger Haskin v. Cullen Daugherty

On July 10, 2024, an ex parte request for orders came before Judge Rizo in Ginger Haskin v. Cullen Daugherty.

The respondent, Mr. Daugherty, was in a romantic relationship with a court clerk.

Before the case was heard, Judge Rizo spoke about the case in a manner that could be overheard by the clerks in the clerk's office. The clerks were aware Judge Rizo was speaking about a litigant who was in a relationship with one of the clerks.

The case involved allegations that Mr. Daugherty had cut off the petitioner's electricity during a period of very high temperatures.

In her response to the commission's preliminary investigation letter, Judge Rizo stated that she was not aware the respondent was in a relationship with a court clerk when the court received the ex parte request in Haskin v. Daugherty.

When Judge Rizo called the case, the respondent's counsel filed a peremptory challenge against her, which she granted. She went to Presiding Judge Place's chambers to ask whether he could preside in the case. She spoke to him in his doorway, which is in the clerks' area, and "informed Presiding Judge Place about the facts of the case briefly."

Judge Rizo said she learned from the commission's preliminary investigation letter that Mr. Daugherty was in a romantic relationship with a court clerk. She subsequently sent an email to the clerk, saying she had not intended to say anything hurtful.

The commission found that, by speaking about the facts of Haskin v. Daugherty, before the case was heard and in a manner that was overheard by the court's clerks, Judge Rizo violated canons 3 and 2A. The commission observed that, if Judge Rizo spoke with Judge Place about the facts of a case from which she was disqualified, as her response suggested, her conduct would raise additional ethical concerns.

C. C.Y.C. v. L.B.

Judge Rizo presided over a family law matter, C.Y.C. v. L.B. , which came before her for many hearings. On one hearing date, Judge Rizo entered the clerks' area and said words to the effect of: "Will this case ever die?"

The commission found that Judge Rizo's remarks about this case were discourteous and undignified.

3. Dismissal of People v. William Calderon Jauregui

In the Spring of 2022, Presiding Judge Place began assigning Judge Rizo to hear traffic infractions. Judge Rizo expressed concern to Presiding Judge Place about the addition of traffic cases to her workload.

On July 13, 2022, a traffic infraction came before Judge Rizo, People v. William Calderon Jauregui. Mr. Jauregui requested a dismissal on the basis that his speedy trial rights had been violated and, alternatively, that the complaint against him was not "verified."

After he made his arguments, Judge Rizo took a brief recess. Upon retaking the bench, Judge Rizo explained to Mr. Jauregui her conclusion that the statute he cited did not make the hearing date untimely, and that his infraction citation did not need to be verified.

Judge Rizo then dismissed his case, stating: So[,] what I'm going to do is this: It's not normal for me to dismiss a citation but I will do that in the interest of justice due to the fact that I'm sitting on assignment this morning that I normally don't sit on. I do not have any resources at this time available to me to verify if the -- if by having the citation

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Outlaw Saloon Happy Hour Monday through Friday from 4-6 p.m. *More info: See ad p. 3. And remember to catch all the NFL games right here!*
The Mogul happy hour 5:30-6:30 p.m. in the bar. Food and drink specials.
Main Street Pizza - *See ad this page for details.*
Distant Brewing happy hour Monday-Thursday from 3-5pm. \$1/off beer/wine/cider/seltzer/kombucha

Friday, October 31/ Halloween Dance Party @ the Bishop Elks Lodge with music by the Bishop Jazz Combo. Time: 6-10 p.m. Location: 151 East Line. \$10.
The Felt Cutouts play Distant from 7-9 p.m.
Halloween Crawl from Clocktower Cellar to Lakanuki in Mammoth. Starts 7:30 p.m.
Tricks and Treats Halloween Spooktacular @ Liberty. Live stage performances, costume contest & more. Doors @ 10 p.m. \$\$\$.
Garage band Amperage plays a **free show** in the Lazy A neighborhood behind Marshalls. Starts: 6 p.m.

Saturday, November 1/ Dos Alas Cubarican Cafe Halloween Bash. Live music, costume contest. Time: 9 p.m. Cover: \$10.
Eli West plays **C5 Studios** in Bishop. Doors 6:30/Show 7 p.m. \$\$\$. Location: 210 S. Warren St. *Tix: visit c5studios.org*

Sunday, November 2/ Greg Gilmore plays Distant Brewing from 7-9 p.m.

Wednesday, November 5/ Cassie Dunn plays Shelter Distilling from 6-9 p.m.

TOWN STUFF

Friday, October 31/ Y.E.S Excellence Workshop @ Cerro Coso Community College. This month focuses on self-awareness & self-management. Time: 11 a.m.
Creative Costumes and Coloring with the Mono Arts Council @ Community Arts Center and Gallery in Mammoth. Join for an all ages open studio with festive art activities, costumes, and Halloween spirit. Location: 501 Old Mammoth Rd #5

October 31-November 2/ Eastern Sierra History Conference @ Cerro Coso College in Bishop. *More info: sierraforever.org.*

Saturday, November 1/ Massive yard sale benefiting the Altrusa Club. Time: 7 a.m. to noon. Location: 250 Sneden St. in Bishop.
Mammoth Mercantile grand opening in the Mammoth Mall from 4-6 p.m. with/ribbon-cutting at 5. Small bites, drinks, community, shopping, more.
11th Annual Owens River cleanup. Meet 8 a.m. @ the Pleasant Valley campground outside Bishop.

November 1-2/ The Felici Piano Trio presents its 2nd concert of the 25/26 winter series "Ghosted" with music by

TOWN STUFF

November 1-2 (cont.)/ Beethoven (his "Ghost" trio), William Bolcom and Schumann. *Tix: ChamberMusicUnbound.org.*
Millpond-A-Thon Disc Golf Tournament at the Millpond Disc Golf Course. 27-hole event layout! Starts 11 a.m. both days.

Sunday, November 2/ Free Meditation open to everyone via The Healing Collective in Mammoth. Location: Main Street Promenade. Time: 6-7 p.m. *Sign up at Apreszen.com/classes.*

Monday, November 3/ Inyo County Water Commission meets. Time: 6 p.m. Location: Water Dept. conference room @ 135 S. Jackson St. in Independence.
Eastern Sierra Pride meets @ Mountain Rambler Brewery in Bishop. Time: 6-8 p.m.
Eastern Sierra Community Housing Board meets in Mammoth. Location: Suite Z, Minaret Mall. Starts 6 p.m.
Submissions due for Mono Arts Council's, "Playful Perspective, a 'Smalls' Show." Show to be held in December. *Info: monoarts.org/callforartists.*

Tuesday, November 4/ Election Day. Go to the polls to decide the fate of Prop. 50.
Inyo County Board of Supervisors meets. Time: 10 a.m. *SE Inyo Meeting in Tecopa or online via inyocounty.us.
Mono County Board of Supervisors meets at 9 a.m. in the Bridgeport County Courthouse.
Eastern Sierra Strummers Community Ukulele Group meets. *See ad below.*

TOWN STUFF

Wednesday, November 5/ MHS Cross Country hosts Rosamond, Cal City, and Frazier Mtn. Race starts at 3 p.m.
Mammoth Lakes Town Council meets at 4 p.m. Location: Council Chamber, Suite Z.
Eastern Sierra Chess Club holds informal play every Wednesday from 5-8 p.m. at Salsa's Taqueria in Bishop.
Candle Making Workshop by Mono Arts Council. Make your own naturally scented candles. Time: 5:30-8:30 pm. Location: 501 Old Mammoth Road #5. \$\$. *Register at monoarts.org.*

Thursday, November 6/ Whitebark Institute's Science on Tap series @ Distant Brewing in Mammoth with Fire Ecologist John Williams. Event starts 6 p.m., talk starts 6:30.
Inyo Cty. Behavioral Health hosts an **Inyo Life Night** with various activities designed for people and families to connect. Time: 5-6:30 p.m. Location: 1360 N. Main St. in Bishop.
Business Excellence Awards Gala to honor top-performing businesses and professionals in Mammoth. Time: 5:30-10:30 p.m. Location: Canyon Lodge. \$\$\$. *For tix and info see mammothlakeschamber.org.*

Saturday, November 8/ Coaching workshop for the Poetry Out Loud competition by the Inyo Council for the Arts. Time: noon. Lunch provided. Location: 150 Willow St. in Bishop.
Wildlife Tracking Workshop with Phil Johnston by Sierra Forever and Eastern Sierra Land Trust. Starts 9 a.m. *Info/register: eslt.org/events*



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Sweetwater Plumbing Inc. FT position for Journeyman Plumber and/or Apprentice Plumber. Full Benefits. Job is located in Mammoth Lakes. Contact 760-914-1266 info@sweetwaterplumbing.com



MAMMOTH COMMUNITY WATER DISTRICT'S Personnel Services Department is currently recruiting for one permanent Human Resources Manager position. FOR APPLICATION INFORMATION/TO APPLY: Please see the District website https://mcwd.dst.ca.us/employment/.



Footloose Sports is hiring Bootfitters and Demo Ski Technicians for the upcoming winter season. We are looking for outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy skiing and prefer working in a fast paced, team-oriented environment. We are searching for individuals with experience but also provide paid training to entry level candidates demonstrating reliability, enthusiasm, and excellent customer service skills. This is a great opportunity to join a legendary Mammoth ski shop. Please submit a current resume to footloose@footloosesports.com.

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H.E.A.R.T.S. Connection Family Empowerment Center is hiring a Family Resource Specialist - 1 part-time position (25hrs/wk) based from home within Mono county. \$20.00/hr. Email susan_graham@heartsrc.org for application and job announcement.

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Reservations Desk Clerk immediate opening at the Double Eagle Resort and Spa in June Lake CA (20 min from mammoth). Must have excellent customer service and computer skills. Full or part time, health benefits, fitness membership and PTO. Great place to work! Email Lodging@doubleeagle.com

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Restaurant Server for Eagles Landing Restaurant at the popular Double Eagle Resort and Spa in June Lake CA. Experience in restaurant service, computers and working as team member are essential.



Surefoot Mammoth is hiring bootfitters for the upcoming winter season. We are looking for enthusiastic skiers who want to work hard and play hard. No experience necessary, we provide paid training. This is a great opportunity to learn a valuable skill in the ski industry. Season pass and custom ski boots provided with employment. Contact Todd at Mammoth@Surefoot.com.

Help Wanted

Full and part time available, health benefits, fitness membership and PTO. Great place to work. Email Lodging@doubleeagle.com

Restaurant bartender for Eagle's Landing Restaurant at the popular Double Eagle Resort and Spa. Experience in restaurant bartending, computers and working as a team member are essential. FT and PT work available. Health benefits, fitness membership, PTO. Great place to work. Email Lodging@doubleeagle.com

Cooks and Prep Cooks jobs available at the famous Eagles Landing Restaurant in June Lake. We offer health benefits, fitness membership and PTO. A great place to work! Email lodging@doubleeagle.com

The Alpenhof Lodge has positions available for full and part time employment. We are a 24 hour per day business looking to add members to our Front Desk team. Competitive wages, benefits, flexible schedule, and housing option may be available for the right individual. Please pick up an application and drop a resume at 6080 Minaret Rd Mammoth.



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PUBLIC NOTICES

Request for Proposals

2025 2026 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS SNOW REMOVAL

The **Hilton Creek Community Services District** is requesting proposals for snow removal service for the 2025/2026 winter season in the Crowley Lake area. Areas to be plowed are:

- *Juniper Loop Road
- *Lager Lane
- *Pinion Drive
- *Hilton Creek Community Services District sewer plant road and parking lot
- *Sierra Springs sewer pump station road

A description of the specific services to be provided is as follows:

Contractor shall provide snow removal services for the period of November 18, 2025, through June 30, 2026. Upon the accumulation of two (2) inches of snow or more from each storm or when conditions require the roads to be cindered, and prior to 7:00 a.m. each day when such accumulation or conditions occur, or as otherwise requested by the District. Contractor shall provide snow removal and cinder services for Lager Lane, Pinion Drive, Juniper Loop Road, the Hilton Creek Community Services District sewer plant road and parking lot, and the Sierra Springs sewer pump station road in Crowley Lake, California during the contract period. Snow removal shall continue until optimum accessibility at the above locations is achieved. Snow shall be blown or hauled off the property with the prior approval of the District.

Contractor shall provide all labor, equipment, material and supplies required or necessary to properly, competently, and completely perform the work or render the services. Contractor shall determine the method, details and means of doing the work or rendering the services.

Contractor shall use snow removal equipment that will satisfactorily perform the required services and specify such equipment in the proposal.

The snow removal contractor will be required to carry specified insurance and comply with prevailing wage law requirements.

To review these and other contract requirements, as well as obtain other pertinent information, or to obtain answers to questions, contact: Lorinda Beatty, Board Secretary at (760) 965-9696.

Please submit all proposals to Hilton Creek CSD, 3222 Crowley Lake Drive, Crowley Lake, CA 93546 or info@hiltoncreekcsd.com

Proposals must be received by 4:00 p.m. November 15, 2025 (postmarks not accepted) to be included in the award process to take place at the Board of Directors Regular Meeting for November 18, 2025 at 5:00 p.m., Crowley Lake Community, Crowley Lake, CA. The contract will be awarded to the lowest responsible, responsive bidder.

TS #2025-0122



NOVEMBER 4, 2025, SPECIAL ELECTION

Pursuant to California Elections Code §15360(a)(2)(e), the elections official is required to provide public notice of the time and place of the manual tally and of the time and place of the selection of the precincts subject to the manual tally before conducting the selection and tally.

MANUAL TALLY PRECINCT SELECTION:

Wednesday, November 12, 2025, at 10 A.M.

MANUAL TALLY:

Begins no earlier than 10 A.M. on Wednesday, November 12, 2025, to 4:00 P.M. daily until completed (excluding weekends and holidays).

Location: Mono County Elections, 74 School St., Annex I, Bridgeport, CA 93517

Elections: 760-932-5537

Main: 760-932-5530

<https://monocounty.ca.gov/elections>

TS #2025-0120



NOVEMBER 4, 2025, SPECIAL ELECTION

Pursuant to California Elections Code §12109, the elections official is required to publish the location where the ballots of this election are to be tallied.

ELECTION NIGHT CENTRAL COUNT LOCATION:

Mono County Elections, 74 School St., Annex I, Bridgeport, CA 93517

Pursuant to California Elections Code §12105, the elections official is required to publish the list of polling places designated for each election precinct.

All Poll Places are open Election Day 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Poll Place Location / Voting Precinct Number and Name)	
Walker Community Center 442 Mule Deer Dr., Walker, CA 96107	01 - Antelope
Bridgeport Memorial Hall 73 School St., Bridgeport, CA 93517	03 - Bridgeport
Chalfant Community Center 123 Valley Rd., Chalfant Valley, CA 93514	04 - Tri-Valley
June Lake Community Center 90 W. Granite Ave., June Lake, CA 93529	05 - June Lake
Crowley Lake Community Center 58 Pearson Rd., Crowley Lake, CA 93546	07 - Long Valley
Mono County Civic Center 1290 Tavern Rd., Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546"	08 - Mammoth Meadow 09 - Mammoth Minaret 10 - Mammoth Pinecrest 12 - Mammoth View 13 - Old Mammoth
Ballot Drop Box Locations (open 10/7/2025) All Ballot Boxes are open 24 hours a day and are locked at 8 p.m. on Election Day	
Walker Community Center 442 Mule Deer Dr., Walker, CA 96107	Bridgeport Memorial Hall 73 School St., Bridgeport, CA 93517
Chalfant Community Center 123 Valley Rd., Chalfant Valley, CA 93514	June Lake Community Center 90 W. Granite Ave., June Lake, CA 93529
Crowley Lake Community Center 58 Pearson Rd., Crowley Lake, CA 93546	Mono County Civic Center 1290 Tavern Rd., Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546
Mono County Elections Ballots can be delivered to this office Mon - Fri 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., or Election Day 7 a.m. - 8 p.m.	

TS #2025-0121

RIZO

continued from page 9

out beyond the 21 days or, as you have explained, the 120 days is appropriate or not, I will dismiss the citation.

In her response to the commission’s preliminary investigation letter, Judge Rizo stated that this case was called the first time she handled the criminal arraignment calendar, when she had “minimal” training. Although this may have been a new assignment, Judge Rizo had been on the bench for eighteen months by the date of this hearing.

The commission found that it was improper for Judge Rizo to dismiss a case for the stated reason that she was presiding in an assignment that she “normally [did]n’t sit on” and did not have resources to verify whether the defendant’s arguments for dismissal were valid. Judge Rizo’s handling of this matter violated her duty to perform judicial duties impartially, competently, and diligently (canon 3); manage the courtroom in a manner that provides all litigants the opportunity to have their matters fairly adjudicated in accordance with the law (canon 3B(8)); and respect and comply with the law and act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and the impartiality of the judiciary (canon 2A).

4. Disqualification from People v. Angel Jacoba Schat

On February 25, 2025, Judge Rizo reviewed a probable cause declaration concerning Angel Jacoba Schat, who was arrested for violating a domestic violence restraining order and driving with a suspended license.

The declaration described the events leading to Ms. Schat’s arrest and identified Paul Schat of Schat Bakery as Ms. Schat’s next of kin.

After reviewing this declaration, Judge Rizo signed the following statement: “On the basis of the foregoing declaration I hereby determine there is probable cause to believe this arrestee has committed a crime.”

On the same day, Judge Rizo signed a statement of disqualification in which she recused herself from People v. Angel Jacoba Schat. Judge Rizo’s declaration included no case number, as a criminal case had not yet been filed against Ms. Schat. The judge affixed a yellow note directing staff to “please lodge once complaint filed for arraignment.”

Since taking the bench, Judge Rizo had routinely recused herself from cases involving Ms. Schat. Ms. Schat’s father, Erick Schat, contributed \$3,000 to Judge Rizo’s judicial campaign in 2020, as one of two reported outside donors.

In response to the commission’s preliminary investigation letter alleging that she made a probable cause determination while disqualified, Judge Rizo asserted that the probable cause determination was urgent and did not require her to assess the truthfulness of the underlying declaration. She said she recused herself from the impending criminal case because “[a] person aware of the facts might reasonably entertain a doubt that [she] would be able to be impartial.”

The commission found that, in light of Judge Rizo’s recusal from the impending criminal case against Ms. Schat,

the judge improperly failed to recuse herself from making the probable cause determination regarding Ms. Schat. The commentary to canon 3E(1) directly addresses probable cause determinations, as follows. “[I]f a judge has a disqualifying interest in a matter, the judge is disqualified from taking any action in the matter, even if it predates the actual filing of a case ... ”

The commentary explains that this application of the canon “assures the parties and the public of the integrity and fairness of the judicial process.”

Judge Rizo’s handling of this matter violated her duty to disqualify herself in any proceeding in which disqualification is required by law (canon 3E(1)); to hear and decide all matters assigned to her except those in which she is disqualified (canon 3B(1)); to perform her duties impartially, competently, and diligently (canon 3); to avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety (canon 2); and to follow the law and act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary (canon 2A).

Judge Rizo’s conduct, as described above, at a minimum, constituted improper action. (Cal. Const., art. VI, section 18, subd. (d).)

DISCIPLINE

In determining to impose this public admonishment, the commission considered the fact that this matter involved numerous acts of misconduct, both in and out of the courtroom. (See policy declaration 7.1(1)(a) [the number of acts of misconduct].)

While Judge Rizo admitted her wrongdoing as to most of the misconduct (see policy declaration 7.1(2)(a) [whether the judge has acknowledged the acts occurred and has shown an appreciation of the impropriety of his or her acts]), the commission considered Judge Rizo’s reports of Ms. Foster and Ms. Eropkin to the State Bar to be particularly serious. Ms. Eropkin and Ms. Foster were required to file full responses with the State Bar and live with the possibility of a criminal prosecution hanging over their heads until the complaints were dismissed.

Judge Rizo’s misconduct also created a contentious atmosphere in a small court. (See policy declarations 7.1(1)(b) [the nature and seriousness of the misconduct] and 7.1(1)(f) [the nature and extent to which the misconduct has been injurious to other persons].)

Further, Judge Rizo’s conduct appeared vindictive and disrupted the small court on which Judge Rizo serves. (See policy declaration 7.1(1)(g) [whether the judge was motivated by a desire to satisfy a personal or venal interest, vindictiveness, or an interest in justice, or compassion].)



BUT IT'S NOT FAIR!

By Libre

California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara wants to get you off the FAIR plan as soon as possible. His goal is to bring traditional fire insurance companies back to the California market, making these plans affordable and accessible, he said in an online public town hall meeting Tuesday.

Established by the state legislature 50 years ago, the FAIR plan is a last minute fire insurance policy that provides coverage for high-risk properties when traditional insurance companies will not.

California is currently facing an insurance crisis. As the state suffers heavy-blows from an increase in fires, insurance companies will raise rates and drop customers, leaving more people to rely on the FAIR plan.

The insurance currently provides plans for over 610,000 clients, according to the FAIR plan's official website. FAIR is seeking a 35.8% increase in insurance rates. If the California Insurance Commission approves the proposal, these increased rates would be implemented in April 2026.

Lara believes the FAIR plan fails to adequately serve Californians in the aftermath of devastating fires. He pointed to the insurance efforts and its shortcomings after the January Palisades and Eaton fires in Los Angeles, and he is going so far as to take FAIR to court.

"We are filing a legal action against the FAIR plan over its failure to handle smoke claims correctly, which we will hear in front of an administrative law judge," Lara said. "Enough is enough."

While the FAIR plan was state created, it is privately run. The FAIR plan covers fire damage, but nothing else, which leaves policyholders needing a second policy to cover liability payments and water damage.

"You should not pay more than is required," Lara said. "That is why we are stopping the growth of the FAIR plan. Getting insurance companies back in the marketplace is essential."

What are these other insurance options? Good question.

"There are four types of insurance companies, the brands you know, the

ones that advertise," said Amy Bach, United Policyholders Executive Director, during the town hall. "They're full license."

"There's a newer kind of insurance company that's coming in strong," she added. Bach didn't name these insurance companies.

Lara mentioned "numerous complaints on how State Farm is handling [fire] claims" have been filed. Lara's team is currently investigating these reports.

Perhaps new insurance companies, like the one Bach mentioned, will take the FAIR plan's place.

"You can't afford something that doesn't exist," Lara said. "Our first and foremost priority is getting insurers back into the state and recommitting to our insurance market."

The need for coverage from these fire insurance companies is pressing.

"This year alone, we've responded to nearly 7,500 wildfires that have burned half a million acres," said Chief Daniel Berlant, California Fire Marshal, during the town hall. "Thirty-one people have died and 15,000 homes and buildings have been damaged."

Once a home catches on fire, he added, it has a 90% chance of being completely destroyed.

Berlant then dove into fire-defensible home-hardening strategies, such as keeping plants five feet away from the structure and trimming tree branches to avoid flames jumping to the roof.

In preparation for the worst case scenario, insurance is "always worth the cost," Bach said.

"Make an informed decision, otherwise you're going to be grossly under insured."



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SHARP

continued from page 5

Time, it seems, has always been the sticking point for the SHARP project.

The project began in 2009 as a community-driven plan to build off existing trail networks in the Sherwins and find some way to maintain them. But because the trails were on Inyo National Forest land and not recognized as official trails, the Town couldn't touch them. Social paths continued to shape the area.

Since then, progress has come in fits and starts. In 2015, the Town built a parking lot on Sherwin Creek Road as part of a larger road project, checking off one of SHARP's early to-dos. A couple of years later, the Mammoth Rock Connector and Meadow Trail Connector were built, followed by a 2020 reroute of the Mammoth Rock Trail.

Then came a boost. In December 2021,

Mammoth Lakes Recreation (MLR) landed \$1.46 million in grants from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy. The haul included \$510,000 for environmental review for the new trails (now in development), and another \$950,000 to build out the Sherwin Meadows Trailhead, which wrapped up construction last summer.

Before concluding Wednesday's meeting, Mulford asked the crowd where they'd like to see the next trail network built.

"The time to get this thing going is now because it might be a while before we're actually building," he said.

He floated a site north of Town, but the crowd seemed content to let that idea marinate, maybe for another 16 years or so.

DISTANT BREWING HAS BEER AND CIDER AND SELTZER AND KOMBUCHA AND WINE AND BEER AND SODA AND SOUPS AND SALADS AND PIZZAS AND COOKIES AND SANDWICHES AND APPETIZERS AND BEER AND COFFEE AND LIVE MUSIC TWICE A WEEK AND AN OPEN MIC EVERY MONDAY AND BEER AND A POOL TOURNAMENT EVERY WEDNESDAY AND A MONTHLY VINYL NIGHT AND OH YEAD DID WE FORGET TO MENTION ALL THE BEER?



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OBITUARY

ISAIAH “OCHO” HESSED CAPPS 2012-2025

This is not an obituary.

It's the story of a most spirited little warrior and his steadfast and immoveable God — a story that begins and ends with a little blue boy who chose joy, love, laughter, gratitude and forgiveness despite a myriad of challenges and the God who held him through it all.

From the moment we first spotted the boy with the blue lips in a healing home (an orphanage called Little Flower) in China 10 years ago, we knew he was extraordinary.

Dang Chen Wen was his Chinese name. DANG! as we so often called him — the most fitting name for a walking exclamation mark of a child. Though his lips and fingertips were tinged blue and starved of oxygen, there was still more than enough in those tiny lungs to belt out every song and welcome every visitor with his trademark love.

He was joy.

He was dying.

He was full of life.

Even with a single-ventricle heart and an open wound on his face from an unrepaired cleft lip and palate, he was completely captivating — a living, breathing reminder that beauty and brokenness can coexist in the same small body.

In a story only God could write, that blue and beautiful boy became our son a couple of years later.



After enduring a failing heart, failing systems, failing families, severe neglect, and multiple medical crises, this charismatic little character stepped into our home and became our Isaiah — our “Ocho,” our perfect number eight, the 8th child in the family.

And as only Isaiah could, he embraced his new life with pure eagerness and delight. He made up for years of illness, abandonment, and loss with bike rides, soccer games, playdates, swimming, school and family time.

And he never, ever stopped saying thank you for it all.

This boy who had been abandoned not once but twice, had every reason to be angry at the world, and yet he chose wonder instead. He never passed up an opportunity to go places

or to be with the people he loved — and he loved everyone.

He always wore a smile and hardly ever wore a shirt.

He was fun.

He was loud.

He was laughter.

He was kind.

He was an enthusiastic “YES!” to anything and everything.

He loved life, his friends, his family, and everything under the sun. He was all in, all the time — our frat boy trapped in a little boy's body.

The boy whose chest scars, facial scars, and lingering speech impediment told the story of a life well fought-for should have been insecure. Tentative. Reluctant. Resentful.

And yet Isaiah lived confidently, his palms wide open to every single experience.

With his medical conditions, our brave boy lived too often with one foot in the grave. But he never let that stop him from planting the other foot fully and completely in life.

After nearly eight years of having the privilege of loving our “Ocho,” our boy said goodbye much the same way he had greeted us all those years ago — as a blue little boy choosing joy, love, laughter, gratitude, and forgiveness.

And on September 28, 2025, our boy went Home.

While our hearts are broken, his

is healed and whole. And now, today, he's wrapped in the arms of the steadfast God who, his whole life long, never once let him go — not as a fragile baby boy in a crib in China, not in a hospital ICU, not in our living room.

We know that the same God who whispered again and again, “I have not forgotten you,” walks with our boy now and forever. And we imagine our Isaiah, with all the volume he has, saying “YES!” and “Thank you!” to the God who has been there all along.

Isaiah will rest at Arlington National Cemetery among heroes and warriors and eventually next to his dad, now retired from military service — a place befitting a boy who fought every battle with courage, joy, and grace.

We will intentionally celebrate this boy we love during Thanksgiving week, a week of gratitude, and thank you for helping us honor and remember the boy who teaches us all that gratitude and joy are a choice, and we can always proclaim “YES!” to both.

Isaiah (Ocho) Hessed Capps had deep local ties. His family has lived in Bishop close to 50 years, starting with Ed & Ad Joseph, who started High Country Lumber. Isaiah is the son of Leia (Steinke) and Devon Capps, who both grew up in Bishop and now live in Carthage, North Carolina. He is the grandson of Glenn and Debbie Steinke who live in Bishop, and Sybil and Buck Gibbons, as well as the nephew of Ken and Melissa Carpenter and Holly and Jeff Acree.

A celebration of life will be held on November 25. There will be a live feed of the service and details can be found at Oneofhis.com



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HARTLEY

PLANE OLD FUN

Theeeeeeeeeee games.

Ravens laying 9 to the Dolphins. O/U 51.5. I would hammer the under like the Ravens are gonna hammer the Dolphins. Lamar is back. Tua is still Tua. Ravens 27-17.

Vikings 8.5 point 'dogs to the Lions. O/U 48.5. How are they going to get 48 points out of this game, especially with the Vikings bringing back QB JJ McCarthy? This after QB Carson Wentz got the crap kicked out of him last week. He was in pain all game. And they say he had a torn labrum and broken bone in his shoulder and kept playing through it. I guess he did. He wanted to make sure that was the LAST game he played this year because the Vikings OL sucks and he wanted to get paid the rest of the year and have some dumbass team sign him next year. Took the beating to ensure he ended up on Injured Reserve. Lions win 33-17

Chargers laying 8.5 to the Titans. O/U 43.5. Charger Coach Jim Harbaugh and QB Justin Herbert get married at halftime. Chargers 23-16.

Falcons 5.5 point 'dogs to the Patriots. As much as it pains me to type this ... the Pats are a good team. They shouldn't be this good this year. I guess changing from a Tomlin-type sorry coach to a Tomlin-type decent coach made a lot of difference, and QB Drake Maye appears to be the real deal. O/U 44.5. Pats 31-25

Packers laying 13.5 to the Panthers. The Panthers need to change their name to the Hairless Cats or something. They are sad. Packers 35-18.

Colts laying 3 to the Steelers in Pitt. O/U 50.5. I agree with that OVER since the Colts should score 50 alone on that pathetic unit the Steelers call their defense. Check this out: "I feel like I'm one of the better cover linebackers in the world to be honest," he said. "I feel like any tight end, any running back that lines up out there, I'm willing to go toe-to-toe with them." This from "Hall of Fame" LB Payton Wilson. His coverage grade this year - 47%. That's bad if you're wondering. It's on a scale of 100, not 50. And he has been removed as a full-time player. Or, "This defense has the potential to be the best of all time." That's from a safety, JUAN THORN-



Hartley's recommendation for the Panther's new logo and mascot.

HILL. His defense reminded me of a time I tried to play my son in Madden and was pushing buttons at the wrong time and players were just flailing around. They should call that button the THORNHILL button.

The **Steelers** have one of the worst defenses in the league and have played the following QBs: Carson Wentz, Dillon Gabriel, Justin Fields and Joe Flacco. Flacco and Fields shredded them. They got shredded by Love and Maye would have shredded them if the Patriots hadn't been watching movies and eating greasy popcorn before playing the Steelers and turning the ball over five times. The Pats marched up and down the field on them. Meanwhile, the Colts offense is rolling and Daniel Jones hasn't turned back into Daniel Jones yet. Colts 43- 20.

Niners laying 2.5 to the Giants. O/U 48.5. Sucks Skattebo got hurt. Feel bad for the fella. He was just getting started. Mac Jones is back to being Mac-corkle Jones. Guess he won't parlay his SF stint into a starting job elsewhere ... unless the hapless Steelers want him. He was a first round pick so Tomlin will love that. Niners 23-19.

Saints 14 point 'dogs to the Rams. O/U 43.5. Tyler Shough is up now for the Saints at QB. Rams are a professional team. They gonna just grind the Saints out. Rams 30-12.

Chiefs laying 1.5 to the Bills. In Buffalo. Huh? Chiefs are back.. Chiefs gonna trade for a pass rusher this week and be scary. This week they lose, though. They lose on purpose so the Bills feel they can beat the Chiefs in the playoffs and rest easy. Mind-f' them. Bills 25-23.

Reasons planes have been turned around recently:

1. A passenger dropped a laptop. Somehow it slipped through the panel on the all and into the hold of the plane. They are afraid of laptops because of their propensity to catch on fire. And yet they lie on every bed and couch in the world. The real scare iswhy the plane built so stuff can slip down there. Airline said "passenger somehow managed to drop it there. The passenger didn't build the plane, yall did.
2. Man stabbed two kids with a fork. One in the head and one in the back. What? Don't they give out plastic utensils with bad meals on the plane? How did he get a fork in? Stole it from the overpriced Chili's I guess.
3. An unruly passenger was wreaking havoc. He complained about his meal and wanted to be moved to an exit row while traveling with a child. That's a no no. Then he started got more aggressive. BAD PARENTING In front of your child. It was a flight from New York to Milan so he probably thought I got plenty of time to torture them. Nope. Turned around.
4. This one had me rolling. A plane



Every time Hartley sees Freddy Freeman and his Cloroxed teeeth, he can't help but see Jim Carrey in the Mask.

turned around because of a rancid odor on the plane. It was determined a passenger boarded the plane with spoiled food? I thought at first it was just Kimchi. But no, spoiled food. What was the passenger planning to do?

If airline food wasn't so bad and eating in the airport wasn't more expensive than eating at Ruth's Chris, people wouldn't need to do this. If you could still receive some chicken sammich that was like wood between two slices of cardboard for free like in the old days,... Maybe the person just had some leftovers in their carry-on from their trip a couple weeks ago when they ate at the Bubba Gumps in the airport. It cost so much they just brought it back with them.

Flying is always fun.

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