



**Walk-a-Thon**  
 Pinnacle High School hosted its eighth annual Walk-a-Thon **Page 10**

**Schools Safe:** CCUSD board tables talks on possible closures



Independent Newspapers/Dave Casadei

Cave Creek Unified School District Governing Board members, from left, Susan Clancy, Janet Busbee and David Schaefer listen attentively during the public comment portion of the board's March 10 meeting. During the meeting, the board 4-1 approved tabling talks on closing one of the district's eight schools. Ms. Clancy was the lone member who opposed tabling discussions.

**4-1 vote pushes proposition off discussion table**

By Dave Casadei

Independent Newspapers

The Cave Creek Unified School District Governing Board tabled talks of closing one of its two middle schools during its March 10 meeting after taking in community feedback from a special meeting the night before.

"There were many comments last night how folks felt rushed and that we were moving too fast regarding closing a school," board member David Schaefer said. "I don't disagree. We just tabled the item. So now

we have some time."

CCUSD must cut \$3.1 million from its 2009-10 budget and crafted a priority list on what to slash first. Included on the list are cuts to programs, resources, staff, extracurricular activities and more. The list, which is nothing more than a rough draft until board members give their final OK, was presented to the community during two different forums conducted in late February and early March.

Another option CCUSD board members and the community are pondering is closing one of the district's elementary or

middle school.

Mr. Schaefer recapped tidbits regarding closure talks from the March 9 special meeting for guests at the regularly scheduled meeting after having 24 hours to digest information.

"Some important data was left off the discussion and I think it's important to let the records show the community knows the potential operational incremental savings of closing a middle school is a little bit north of \$1 million," he said. "That's seven

See CCUSD — Page 2

**City amends Palmeraie zoning**

Planning Commission talks project integration in PV

By Zach Colick

Independent Newspapers

The Scottsdale Planning Commission's tie vote March 11 during a more than 90-minute-long discussion to uphold a new zoning interpretation for the controversial Palmeraie project essentially allows the city to borrow land from Paradise Valley as it sees fit so the project can work.

Before determining whether the Planning Commission should appeal the zoning administrator's decision, Planning Commission Vice Chairman Eric Hess said he and his six colleagues were "put between a rock and hard place" after finding out the zoning administrator made a change Feb. 17 to Five Star Development's zoning application without their knowledge.

"I'm disgusted with the way this has been handled," Commissioner Hess said. "This has become a total bureaucratic process and denies the public the right of due process."

The decision by the city's zoning administrator allows for the inclusion of "gross land area" for the Planned Regional Center zoning Five Star seeks to make the Palmeraie project viable and fully integrate with the Ritz-Carlton, Paradise Valley Resort project in Paradise Valley.

The change could pave the way for denser and taller development at Scottsdale and Indian Bend roads.

Had the Planning Commission decided to appeal the zoning administrator's decision, the city would have been involved in litigation with itself as city officials would have had to hire or find an in-house attorney to argue against the zoning administrator's decision.

"This is such a mess," said Planning

See Palmeraie — Page 3

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## Scottsdale dating service settlement reached

Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard Feb. 23 announced a \$500,000 settlement with Sun West Video, Inc., doing business as Great Expectations for Singles, a dating service located in Scottsdale.

According to the settlement, Great Expectations must pay \$250,000 in restitution to eligible consumers who were victimized by the company's deceptive practices. The remaining \$250,000 will be paid to the state for consumer fraud prevention.

The settlement also requires the company to correct its alleged deceptive business practices, including misrepresenting the makeup of its member database and the status of its members, illegally obtaining consumers' protected credit information and extending the term of its membership agreements beyond that allowed by law.

In June 2008, Attorney General Goddard filed a lawsuit alleging that Great Expectations violated the Arizona Consumer Fraud Act and the Arizona Dating Referral Services Act. Also named in the lawsuit were Sun West Video's President John R. Meriggi, Great Expectations' Director Michael Buhler and Sales Representative Geri Schencker.

The lawsuit alleges that Great Expectations used coercive sales tactics, misrepresentations and other deceptive practices to sell expensive dating service memberships to Arizona consumers, typically costing thousands of dollars. The alleged illegal practices include:

- Misrepresenting to consumers the overall number of Great Expectations' participating members, the number of participating members in certain age groups and the number of new members joining the service each month. Great Expectations also told consumers that two to three marriages occurred between members every month when it had no credible basis for such statements.

- Misrepresenting to consumers that it had conducted a criminal background check on all of its members.

- Using membership agreements that illegally extended initial memberships beyond one year and were designed to mislead consumers to believe they had no right to cancel or rescind the agreements.

- Unlawfully obtaining consumers' credit information as soon as they arrived at the Great Expectations office to meet with a representative, before they received a sales presentation or agreed to purchase a membership.

- Using high-pressure sales tactics during one-on-one, hours-long presentations to consumers, during which sales representatives urged consumers to contact their credit card companies to get an increased credit limit sufficient to pay for a membership.

Anyone who believes they were a victim of fraud by Great Expectations or others are urged to contact the Attorney General's Office in Phoenix at 602-542-5763.



Independent Newspapers/Dave Casadei

## Nature center set to open this week

A newly constructed nature center will open to the public immediately following a ribbon-cutting ceremony 9 a.m. Thursday, March 19 at Cave Creek Regional Park, 37019 N. Lava Lane in Cave Creek. Several features that make the 4,000-square-foot nature center unique include a garden roof over the main space to increase the insulation value, a solar power generating panel to help offset energy consumption and the use of recycled materials. Visit the Web site at [www.maricopa.gov/parks](http://www.maricopa.gov/parks) or call the park office at 623-465-0431.

## CCUSD

Continued From Page 1

figures — its a big number. In my opinion, that's too big of number to ignore. It's equivalent to 20 teachers, impacts well over 500 students, and is also equivalent to one-third of the priority list we've been working on."

Because of the savings, Mr. Schaefer told fellow board members and guests he favors closing a middle school and aligning the district's elementary schools to K-6 format. He also believes closing a school impacts the fewest students at the end of the day. But because of the sensitive nature of school closures, and the limited time to collect and analyze data, he wants the district and community to move cautiously while making stressful decisions in a short time period. He

also warns against being too nit-picky when determining cuts.

"I hope, and I know in my own personal instance, I will use that time wisely and try to develop more options that take in to account that we have an eight-school district and we need to look out for all 6,000 kids," Mr. Schaefer said. "I challenge the community and I challenge the board to look at the priority list, which is \$3.1 million, and tell me not everything on there is not priority No. 1. I challenge everybody here, particularly member Clancy, to stop micromanaging these people (fellow board members and administrators) and start looking at the bigger picture here."

Ms. Clancy denied micromanaging, claiming she just wants to ensure as much information as possible is brought before the board.

Governing Board President Mark Warren

quipped the board has "deforested Brazil" with the amount of data it has collected researching the closure, but stressed the goal is to keep class sizes as minimal as possible and to prevent any affects on any core classrooms.

### Support for Dr. Lewis

Cactus Shadows High School Interim Principal Dr. Donna Lewis received heavy support during the public comment portion of the CCUSD Governing Board's March 10 meeting. Many in attendance supported the idea that she lose the interim label and become the school's official principal.

CSHS senior Lucas Fahringer told the board he and his fellow students seek consistency in their school administration, noting this year's seniors have had three different principals.

"Dr. Lewis is a wonderful principal and we shouldn't waste the money on trying to find a new principal when we already have a quality principal," he said. "Why would we, when I hear how many budget problems the city has, spend any resources finding a new principal when we already have a smart, funny and well-liked principal who we all love and want to keep?"

CSHS senior Stephanie Light is upset she has been unable to form a solid relationship with her principals over her four years of high school, noting they always leave. She believes Dr. Lewis truly cares about all students and appreciates her effort to try to get to know every student.

While no board decision was made because it was the public comment portion of the meeting, members listened closely to what the public had to say.

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