

Drought & High Use Create Unprecedented Water Situation

I have photostats (remember those?) of the original deeds from 1902, 1903, and 1908 for the three subdivision parcels that make up today's lot on the Inverness Mesa where my house stands. The total paid for what amounts to about one-third of an acre was \$270 (in gold coin!).

All three deeds reserved to the seller (Julia Shafter Hamilton and the Inverness Land and Water Company) "...all waters from springs and streams...running through said Inverness for the purpose of supplying the purchasers of lots therein with water for domestic purposes and irrigating gardens." When you bought a homesite, you got the land, roadway access, and a water connection (and you agreed you'd forfeit the property if you kept hogs or goats or brewed intoxicating liquors).

We know little about what the Inverness water system looked like back then, but it's likely the two biggest differences from today were in the number of houses served and that there was probably not much in the way of water treatment facilities. That early system served only a few dozen houses in First Valley, on the Mesa, and in Second Valley. Today's system of 517 connections stretches from North Dream Farm Road to Tomales Bay State Park.

One thing that hasn't changed is that the principal sources of water are the same today as in the early 1900s. Small springs, seeps, and natural drainages on the east-facing slope of the Inverness Ridge feed some half-dozen streamlets that combine to form First and Second Valley creeks. From the earliest days, the town's water system has maintained a network of small catchment basins in these streamlets to divert some of the flow into pipes that bring the water to today's two high-tech, ultrafiltration and nanofiltration treatment plants, then into nine storage tanks distributed among five sites, and finally into the mains that convey it to your homes and businesses.

While the town's population has increased significantly, it's likely there has been little change in the volume of water available in the watershed. Water system staff closely monitors the flows in the streams. We have developed over the years an unscientific rule of thumb that says in any year in which total streamflows measure at least 700 gallons per minute (gpm) at the end of February, we will have no shortage of water for the rest of that year. What is so alarming this year is that streamflow measurements on February 28 totaled only a paltry 110 gpm, and subsequent rainfall through May came to an anemic 2.44 inches. These are record-setting low numbers.

As we enter the driest season of the year, as well as the historically highest-usage time, we hope these numbers convey just how critical and unprecedented the situation is. Even more ominous, climate-change uncertainties and the threat of a record-setting long-term drought mean we can't be sure we'll receive sufficient rainfall this coming winter to adequately recharge water retention for next year's streamflows. The most effective step you can take immediately is to cut back on outdoor watering—even stopping altogether this year.

As the season proceeds, water updates and notifications will be provided mainly via email. If you aren't receiving the Inverness Public Utility District's alerts, please join our distribution list by sending your name and email address to admin@invernesspubd.org.

— Wade Holland, Inverness Public Utility District (IPUD)
Customer Services Manager



This 55,000-gallon water tank in Seahaven is one of nine tanks comprising the Inverness Water System. The gauge on the 16-foot tall tank shows it is about three-quarters full. Water in the tank flows out through the big pipe on the right into the main on Via de la Vista. Normally, only the top valve is open, which is about one-quarter of the way up from the bottom of the tank, so even if the tank empties all the way down to that valve's level, 25% of the tank's capacity is held in reserve for fire and other emergencies.

How Much H₂O Should You Be Using?

Many Inverness residents ask how their usage compares to that of others of similar household size and what their goal for water conservation should be. Not sure how much water you are using? The left side of an Inverness water bill shows average daily usage during the billing period. For example, you can see your average daily usage during the May/June period on the water bill distributed on June 25.

Below right is a chart for gauging a household's daily usage as compared to a standard usage benchmark. It also lets you check how you might fare should stricter conservation measures be mandated. The gallons shown are recommended maximums for the entire household (not for each resident).

These are not rationing allocations—not yet anyway! But you can judge what may be in store if strict rationing becomes necessary. Most households can reduce usage by cutting back—or eliminating—outdoor watering. Also, run dishwashers on short cycle and only when full; take shorter showers; flush toilets less frequently; avoid running water while brushing teeth, etc.

The Inverness Public Utility District provides fire protection and municipal water service to its service area within the unincorporated community of Inverness (population 1,304 with 517 water connections). IPUD's service area encompasses some 1,600 acres, of which 500–600 acres are watershed. Three hundred seventy-three acres of the watershed are in public ownership; the District owns 190 acres and Tomales Bay State Park owns 183 acres. The District effectively manages the entire publicly owned watershed, including the portion owned by the State Park.

Is Rationing Likely?

As of this writing, voluntary conservation is working well—and we thank you! But streamflows continue to drop and summertime is already upon us. Voluntary conservation is keeping us going at this moment, but be aware that we'll have to keep cutting back steadily until we see some rainfall. The IPUD's Board of Directors will make the decision on rationing and how to implement it. You can go to www.invernesspud.org (or by phone at 415-669-1414) to see the options for rationing presented to the Board. The Directors will also decide how to allocate water to properties being used for short-term rentals (such as Airbnb, VRBO, HomeAway), as well as to weekender and vacation homes. You are invited to express your thoughts on these important matters by emailing admin@invernesspud.org.

— Wade Holland

Household Size	Current Daily Use Benchmark (avg. gallons per day)	Strict Conservation Goal (avg. gallons per day)
1	56	37
2	97	65
3	138	92
4	179	119
5	220	147
6	261	174
7	302	201
8	343	229



Wise Up About Defensible Space

Let's be practical about "defensible space." That's the area around your house firefighters can use to prevent it from burning down in a wildfire. The 2020 fire inspection in Inverness done by the Marin County Fire Department revealed very few houses with adequate defensible space.

Most houses are lost in a fire due to dispersal of embers from the oncoming fire. Yet creating defensible space does not mean you need a ring of bare dirt around your home. Through proper planning and routine maintenance, you can have both a beautiful landscape and a fire-resistant home. Zones of particular importance for vegetation management begin with the area closest to your home.

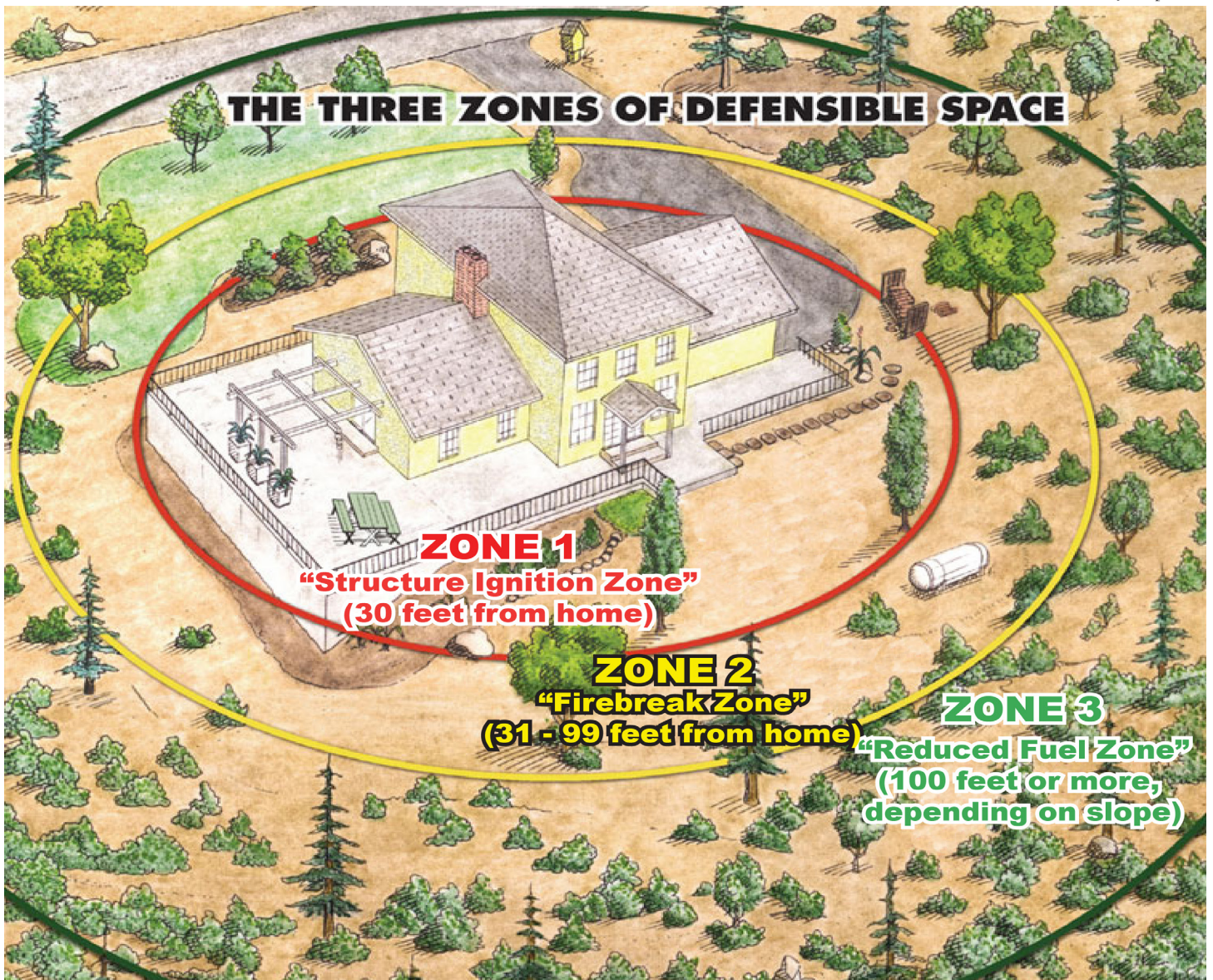
To help our homeowners pass their future fire inspections, the Inverness Foundation has applied to be a FireWise community. If we are accepted, we will need residents to volunteer to work with their neighbors to make houses and property more fire-safe.

FireWise is not a regulatory program. It is strictly voluntary. But it will help property owners comply with county and state requirements, and also learn how to prevent property loss in case of a fire. It also will help us get grants for fire prevention work including more chipper days to help us clear overgrowth from our properties.

In conjunction with work done last spring by Tomales Bay State Park, Seahaven property owners have banded together, at their own expense, to implement a shaded fuel break on private land along part of the boundary with the park. Property owners at the top of Perth are also working together to improve defensible space, and Paradise Ranch Estates is already a FireWise neighborhood. If you want to help your neighbors get together to accomplish your FireWise work, email jerrymeral@gmail.com

— Jerry Meral

Illustration: Pierce Conservation District, Puyallup WA



The President's Report

IPUD Fire and Water Initiative: We did not pursue an initiative election to raise funds for fire prevention and water conservation because we listened to the community's message that this was best handled by IPUD itself. We have let IPUD know that we'll be here to assist them if they decide to seek voter approval for such projects.

FireWise: We have applied to become a FireWise organization to get grants and assist with neighborhood projects to reduce fire hazards. We urge all property owners to bring their homes into compliance with the inspection the Marin County Fire Department did last summer. For help finding your 2020 report, contact Fire Captain Jamal Cook at jcook@marincounty.org with your name, address, and phone number.

Fire Insurance: The good news is that we appear to be getting our fire insurance policy for the Gables building and the separate Museum archives building renewed.

Trail Maintenance: This past year, all work was done by board members. We continue to keep up our trails, and we are adding aluminum treads to some bridges. Unfortunately, the storm-induced destruction of the bridge by the tennis courts is likely irremediable. County and coastal regulations now severely restrict work along streams and may even prohibit a new bridge.

Inverness Fair: No fair again this year, but we look forward to its comeback in 2022.

Annual Meeting: Our Board of Directors' election will take place by email in July. If we don't have your email, we will mail you the information, but we're all volunteers and would rather fix a path or answer emails than stick on stamps. Hint: send your email address to president@invernessassociation.org.

Termed out on our Board! Many thanks to Bob Johnston who represented us on area-wide committees including the group of coastal villages that worked with State Senator Mike McGuire on critical issues of wildfire and tourism. Catherine Caufield chaired our design review committee, committing untold hours of research on development projects to prepare IA comments to the County of Marin. She also revamped our membership database and wrangled renewals and new members. I will miss her support on tough issues and determination to help me find humor in difficult tasks.

— Kathy Hartzell

Storm damage to the upper First Valley bridge left no choice but removal, as any repairs would have involved piers in the creekbed. (Photo: Elisabeth Ptak)

A Great Fire Season Resource:

firesafemarin.org

- Tips, videos, and fact sheets about how to prepare for an oncoming fire
- Step-by-step guidance on defensible space and home hardening
- Information on community partnerships and programs like chipper days



Inverness Association and Foundation Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019–2020

During the 2019-20 fiscal year, which ended almost a year ago, the Inverness Foundation experienced a small net loss. Much of that was due to an unexpectedly huge increase in our insurance expenses and fairly extensive repair work on the Gables.

Most other income and expenses during the year were on a par with the same categories in past years, and we were able to give a few grants for local community projects including the Inverness Shakespeare Festival and Waterdogs swim classes.

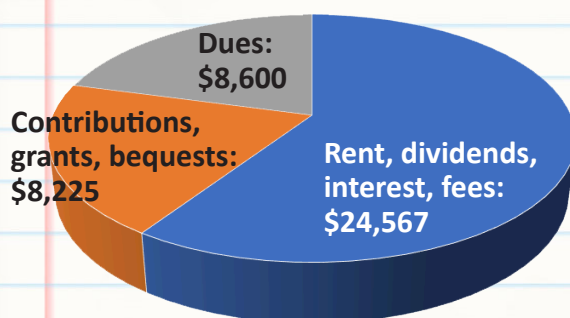
Please note that the Jack Mason Museum (JMM) income and expenses are not included in this report. While we include them in our tax returns, their assets and income are independent of those of the IF. The JMM would be happy to provide their report to you upon request.

The IF maintains savings and checking accounts at Wells Fargo Bank. Reserve funds are with Vanguard. The Board considers these funds as reserves for very important needs that cannot be met with annual income and gifts.

Happily, the outlook for fiscal year 2020-21 looks considerably better. Insurance costs after considerable shopping have moderated a bit and maintenance expenses were much lower.

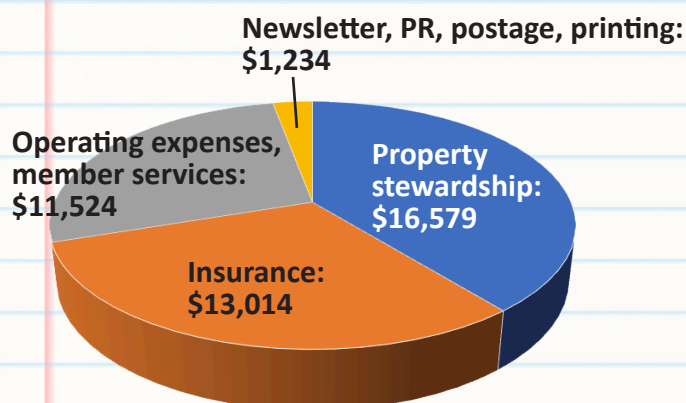
— John Longstreth

INCOME



Rent, dividends, interest, fees:	\$24,567
Dues:	\$8,600
Contributions, grants, bequests:	\$8,225
Total:	\$ 41,392

EXPENSES



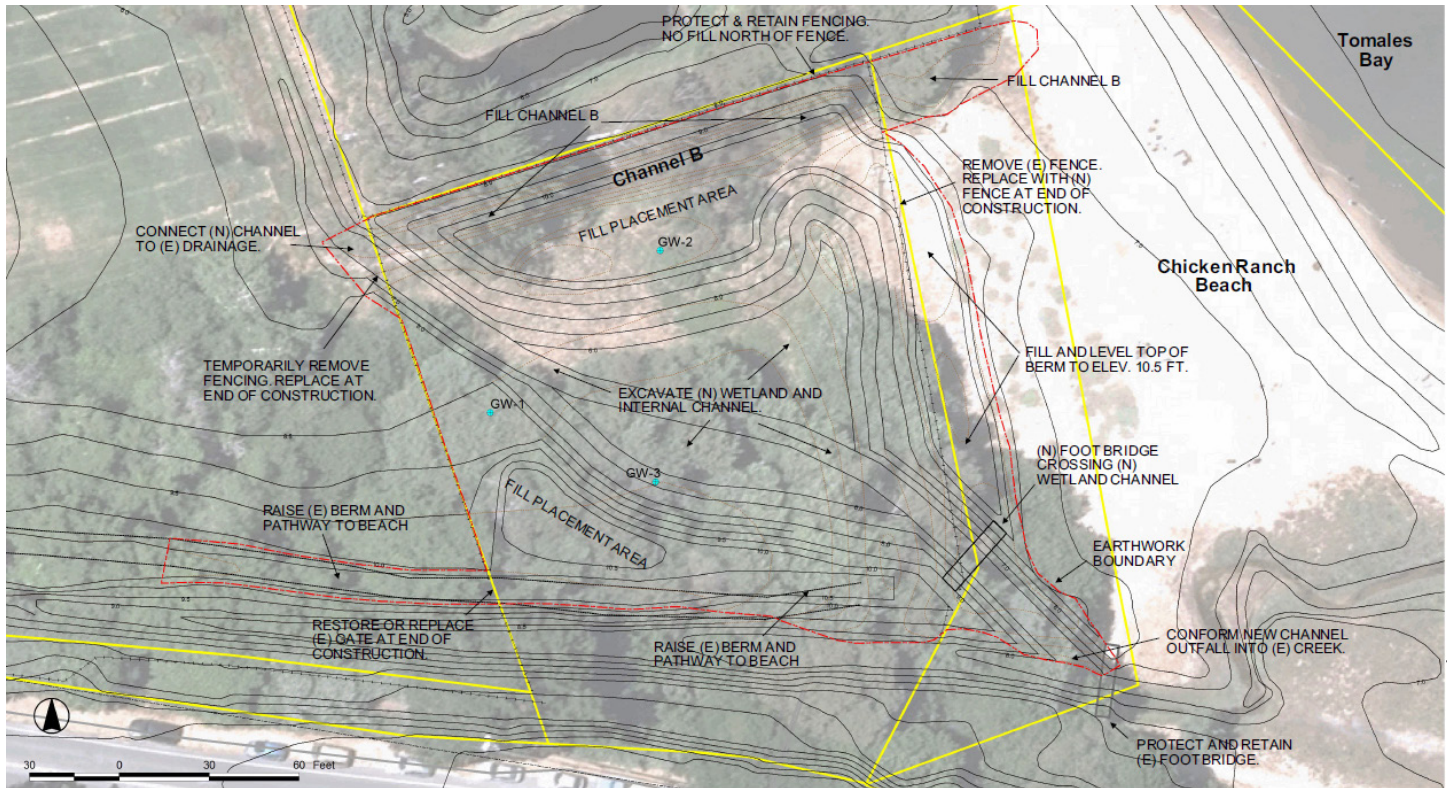
Property stewardship (Gables; trails):	\$16,579
Insurance:	\$13,014
Operating expenses, member services:	\$11,524
Newsletter, PR, postage, printing:	\$1,234
Total	\$42,351

Chicken Ranch Beach Project Update

The Inverness Foundation has long worked with the Tomales Bay Watershed Council Foundation and the County of Marin to eliminate the fecal coliform contamination at Chicken Ranch Beach and to partially restore the former Third Valley

wetland habitat. The hydrologic plan, known as the “30% Design,” is complete. Next steps are engineering plans, CEQA, and permits. For more information or to donate to this effort, visit www.tomalesbaywatershed.org.

— Tom Gaman

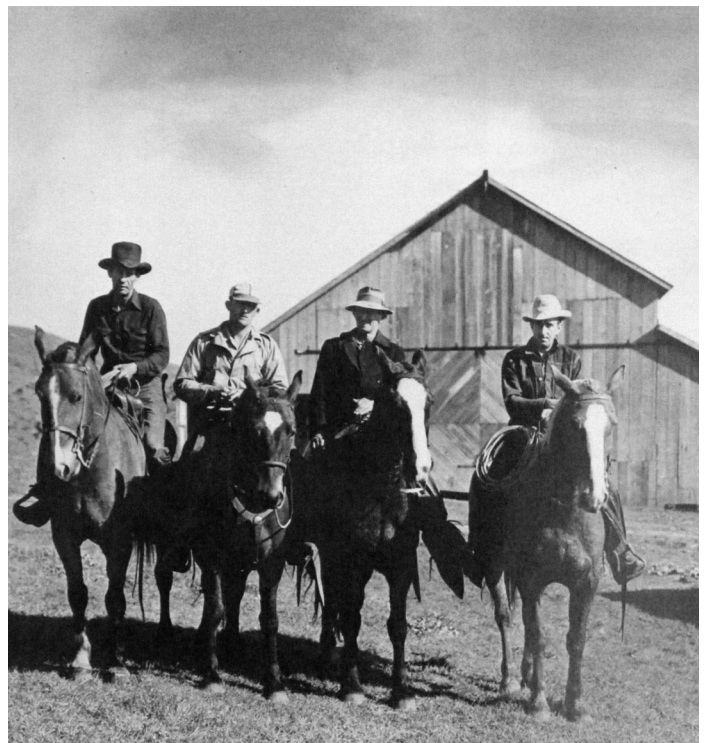


Kamman Hydrology, Inc., San Rafael CA

Committee Report: Jack Mason Museum of West Marin History

Because of the pandemic, the Museum has been in partial hibernation, but committee members Meg Linden, Dewey Livingston, and Mo Blumenthal have remained steady. We look forward to re-opening the archives to researchers and to special hours for Meg’s Bear Valley Ranch exhibit, which had to be closed a week after it opened. The public now has access to the exhibit during the Inverness Library open hours. Dewey has hired Anna Guth to assist him in tying up loose ends and act as final editor for his long-awaited Point Reyes history book.

— Andrew Buckingham



Cowboys pose during a roundup at Y Ranch around 1947 (A Seth Wood photograph from the current exhibit at the Jack Mason Museum)

Committee Report: Membership

The Inverness Association and Foundation membership year goes from July 1 to June 30, so now is the time to renew! It's easy to do. You can put a check in the enclosed envelope (\$30 for individuals; \$45 for families) or renew through PayPal at www.invernessassociation.org.

Your membership donations allow the Inverness Foundation to do so many important things: maintain The Gables, home to the library and the Jack Mason Museum; preserve our much-loved Inverness paths and local parks, including Martinelli Park which is also a helipad for medical emergencies; and work on many fronts to reduce our risk of wildfire, including by making Inverness a FireWise community. We also make traditional Inverness summers possible for many children by acting as fiscal agents for scholarships for youth sailing and tennis programs of the Inverness Yacht Club and Inverness Tennis Club.

Inverness Artist Returns Home To Open Gallery

Home has been a refuge for many during the pandemic. For Tom Biagini, that meant coming back to Inverness. It wasn't just about returning to the old and familiar, but also starting something new.

While for many, holding on to what they have has been a struggle during the pandemic, for others it presented a chance to make a change. Biagini, who had lived in LA for 15 years, decided to open his gallery and be closer to family at the same time. "A large part of my work is obviously creating art. But the other part is enjoying the space and connecting with people," said Biagini.

The Tom Biagini Gallery opened at the end of 2020. It displays paintings and other art and is also the artist's studio. For sale, too, are locally inspired silkscreened sweatshirts and t-shirts he designed and printed.

The gallery occupies the former longtime home of Shaker Shop West, and most recently, the First Valley gift shop. Now it tells the story of Biagini's past and present. On display are windswept plein air landscapes of Drakes Estero and Abbotts Lagoon. Cityscapes of San Francisco and Los Angeles depict streets and buildings significant in the artist's life. Another room of the gallery is filled with portraits, both people Biagini knows personally, and figures of cultural importance. Included in this collection is a large oil painting of George Floyd, who was murdered by police in Minneapolis in August, 2020, and whose death set into motion protests around the world, including peaceful marches in Inverness. Floyd's face, which seems to emerge from the canvas, commands attention and with muted tones of blue, brown,

Additionally, the Inverness Association provides a forum for local issues, works with the county to review new developments, and collaborates with other local agencies to maintain the health of the Tomales Bay Watershed.

I've enjoyed being your Membership Secretary for the last six years, but now that I've hit the term limit for board members, it's time to say goodbye. Thank you all for your generosity to the Inverness Association and Foundation and, through them, the Inverness community as a whole.

— Catherine Caufield

and lavender, pronounces the influence of his life and death. Tom Biagini Gallery is located at 5 Inverness Way South, Inverness. Hours: Thursday-Sunday 12 noon–6:00 p.m.

— Angela Whitney & Alex Porrata



Artist Tom Biagini at his Inverness gallery (Photo: Angela Whitney)

Inverness Association & Foundation

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*Term Expires June 30, 2021

**Appointed, subject to confirmation

The Bagpiper

Summer 2021

Editor: Elisabeth Ptak

Design: Matthew Hartzell

Mailing: Barry and Linda Linder



Board meetings are held at the Jack Mason Museum on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome. The 2021 election of board members will be held by email.

Due to COVID restrictions, we are currently holding meetings via Zoom. Meeting agendas are posted on our website and at the Inverness Post Office. If you wish to join the Zoom meeting or speak to the board, contact president@invernessassociation.org.

The agenda is posted in advance on our website: www.invernessassociation.org.