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A Monthly Community Newspaper

Plans for new waste dump in Orange subject to environmental review

By Tina Richards

Chandler LLC cannot bury the natural riparian habitat next to Santiago Creek under 1,240,000 cubic yards of construction waste unless the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board votes to allow it. Before that can happen, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared and all impacts disclosed.

Chandler LLC, operating as OC Reclamation, owns 14 acres near Santiago Canyon Road and Cannon St., bordering Santiago Creek. Much of the property is below grade, and the company wants to bring it up to street level, infilling the area with such construction debris as rock, sand, gravel, concrete, glass, brick, ceramics and clay products. The process, it says, will take four to five years. It has not indicated what it plans to do with the parcel once it is leveled.

Chandler identifies the site, zoned sand and gravel in the City of Orange General Plan, as an abandoned mine pit, which it was 60 years ago. In the interim, nature has reclaimed the depression, and it is now home to wildlife, native plants and, with enough rain water, fish. Slightly less than two acres of the property, considered a wetland, have been declared "Waters of the State." That means they are protected, and any discharge of waste or fill into those waters is regulated.

Mine reclamation is misnomer

Chandler sought approvals for a "mine reclamation project" beginning in 2017. It planned to clear and recontour the property, then deposit infill material into the pit. It got the go-ahead from a number of public agencies, including the Air Resources Board and Fish and Wildlife. It attempted to secure a grading permit from the City of Orange. It also needed a waste discharge permit from the Water Quality Board. It applied for that in 2022, submitting a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) instead of a full-blown EIR.

when a project's impacts are deemed less than significant or, if significant, can be lessened by some form of mitigation. In this case, for example, biological resources were considered to suffer the most impact. That impact would be made "less than significant," by site monitoring and relocating habitat to a place 10 miles away.

The Water Quality Board was preparing to adopt the mitigated negative declaration and the waste discharge requirements for the project in early 2023. Residents appealed to the board, asking it to deny the MND, citing irreparable damage to the creek, native plant and wildlife, including several endangered species. They also noted the site's proximity to Oakridge Private School and the negative impacts four years of truck traffic and waste disposal would have on that facility.

Tell it like it is

The board received over 300 letters from the public and, overwhelmed, delayed the scheduled hearing on the topic three times. Water Board staff finally held a public meeting in the Orange City Council chambers. Staff told the audience it was "there to listen" and apparently, it did.

The MND did not move forward. Instead, a Notice of Preparation for an EIR was released on May 28. The project is no longer called an "abandoned mine reclamation," but is identified as an Inert Debris Engineered Fill Operation (IDEFO). An IDEFO is essentially a dumpsite and the moniker more accurately reflects what Chandler plans to do with the property.

In calling for an EIR, the Water Quality Board cited a number of concerns, including areas classified as Waters of the State, appropriateness of the site for inert waste disposal, removal of onsite habitats and impacts to endangered species, adequacy of proposed mitigation, the proj-



Students from McPherson Magnet School, the RoboPlayers, from left, Yuki Downey, Noah Slates, Gavin Fennel and Lorenzo Davis, are excited to see their robot successfully performing during the RoboPlay Challenge Competition. Teammate Laila Teworos Tamru is not pictured. See page 14 for more on RoboPlay.

Orange budget cuts not as brutal as expected

By Carrie Graham

The Orange City Council has identified almost \$5 million in cuts from the city's 2024-25 budget, but still fell \$8.7 million short of the target.

A special budget study session was held immediately before the council's regularly scheduled June 11 meeting to finish the exercise that began at the end of a marathon meeting, May 28. It was after 1 a.m. when the agenda item for proposed budget cuts came up. By 2 a.m., the weary council was ready to continue the discussion to another time.

"Nothing good happens after midnight," Arianna Barrios declared. The June 11 discussion was slow going as each councilmember had their own non-negotiables.

Just about the only cut that passed unanimously was a 50% decrease in the library budget, already one of the lowest recipients of city funds. However, summer programs are still safe.

Activities like the Summer Reading Club aren't funded through the city, but through the Friends of the Orange Public Library, a volunteer organization.

See "Orange budget" continued on page 5

City sales tax measure likely to go to voters

By Carrie Graham

The Orange City Council weighed the options and merits of a citywide sales tax at its June 11 meeting, but delayed making a decision until later in the month. Though they've been hesitant to decide, it's becoming less likely that city services can remain unchanged without an increase in the city's revenue.

three sets of data, for 0.5, 0.75 and 1.0% sales tax increases over periods of time from 10-20 years. A 0.5% increase would leave the city still in the hole. A 0.75% increase would get the city close, but more cuts and belt-tightening would be necessary.

JULY 2024

NEWS INSIDE

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Orange City Council overrules advisory committees' denials and residents' concerns to approve a tightly packed housing complex.

See Small lot, page 2; Letters, page 4

NOT SO FAST

Nonprofit fails to alert city of plans to convert single-family home into temporary multi-family shelter.

See Foundation, page 7

HEARTS AND SOULS

Annual Memorial Day commemoration is solemn, yet celebratory with memorable talks, band music and song.

See Fairhaven, page 7

ALL BOXES NOT CHECKED

A developer's appeal to skip a requirement n the city's land-use process is denied by the Drange City Council.

See Orange, page 8

HIT THE GROUND

A negative declaration is filed

See "New dump" continued on page 3

The council was presented with

The HUB Resource Center was presented with a \$3 million donation from the California Department of Housing and Community Development, June 14. The funds were secured through the efforts of State Senator Tom Umberg (34th District) and State Assemblyman Avelino Valencia (68th District). The HUB Resource Center in Orange provides services for unhoused individuals and families. From left, Tom Umberg, HUB CEO Holidav Zimmerman, Orange Mayor Dan Slater, Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez, HUB Executive Director Kylee Simonton and Avelino Valencia.

Only a 1.0% increase would allow the city to dig itself out and begin rebuilding reserves while retaining the same services residents have become accustomed

There are four sales tax brackets in Orange County ranging from 7.75% to 9.25%. Of the 10 cities that levy a sales tax, seven are at 8.75%, including Garden Grove, Placentia and Fountain Valley. Even with a 1.0% increase, Orange would still have a lower rate than Santa Ana and Los Alamitos.

The truth be told

Although many residents have said they would support a tax increase if it keeps services at the

See "City sales tax" continued on page 5

RUNNING

Foundation formed to benefit public schools has given teacher grants, the arts, wellness centers and sports programs a big boost.

See OUPSF, page 11

FOLLOW US at Foothills Sentry



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Small lot infill development gets green light

By Carrie Graham

Developer Intracorp Homes will be the first to build housing in Orange under the city's 2021 Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance. The City Council's unanimous approval, May 28, came after the city's Design Review Committee (DRC) and Planning Commission both rejected it.

Those reviewers found the project too massive for the site, recognizing negative impacts on traffic and neighborhood privacy. The only changes after the Planning Commission denial was the unit count reduced from 49 to 48, and planned three-story homes abutting the backyards of neighbors were reduced to two-story, with setbacks increased by two to five feet. Rooftop decks on those units were eliminated, and bedroom windows raised to above eye-level.

The project site is the abandoned AT&T building on Katella and Cambridge. Residents on neighboring Carleton Street, who share the development's northern border, have lodged a number of complaints since December. The majority are not against housing being built, but believe the planned community, which will fit 48 units on a 2.71-acre lot, is just too dense and too tall. They say their single-story homes bordering the project will be overwhelmed by the multi-story façade, their privacy will be lost, and yards cast in shade. Traffic on an already burdened Cambridge Street will lead to accidents.

An imperfect fit

"Housing should go on this lot, I absolutely agree with that," said Carol Fox, a former DRC member speaking as a resident. "Just because housing needs to go there doesn't mean it needs to go in asis. You can add conditions."

A primary disconnect for residents was language in the city's Small Lot Subdivision Guidebook. It clearly states, "For small lot subdivisions involving five or more lots ... the project requires approval by the DRC and the Planning Commission." Many were of the impression that the rejections by the two entities should have left the Intracorp project dead in the water.

However, Senior Planner Chad

Local scholars excel Ortlieb explained, "On a project like this one, where there's a General Plan amendment and a zone change, Orange municipal code specifically states the city council has the final say."

Unlike with the DRC and Planning Commission meetings, which were largely attended by opponents of the project, a number of residents showed up or submitted emails to the council in support. They referred to the disused land in its current state as "blighted," citing it as both an eye sore and a safety hazard.

A blighted site

The former AT&T building, which closed about five years ago, has become a hotspot for police activity. In the past 18 months, OPD has documented 53 visits, including 13 arrests and one death. "It's routine for the bike team and HEART team to go by every day, because it's a large building and it's vacant," said Police Chief Dan Adams.

Although Code Enforcement tried for months to contact the

owner to secure the property, the owner was unresponsive, leading the city to ultimately condemn the building in January 2023. In addition to the ailing building's criminal activity, some also questioned what else could go there, for better or worse.

The property had been zoned for commercial use, and while there had been some interest shown by various businesses, none had been formally submitted by the time Intracorp proposed its project.

Many in favor also cited the need for more affordable housing for families in Orange. One resident in opposition, however, noted that just building more housing won't necessarily solve the problem.

"It was said at the last city council meeting that 39% of the homes in Orange are owned by investors," said Brandy Romero. "What's to say that these homes aren't going to be owned by investors? We need to do something to regulate that before we build more housing."

The traffic issues, dismissed by the developer and city traffic engineer, did snag the attention of Councilman Jon Dumitru. In voting to approve the project, he asked that another traffic study be done in about two years to determine whether accidents have increased or not.

"That," a Carleton resident sighed, "will be too late."





Iowa State University announced that Lauren Kettner, an interior design major from North Tustin, was named to the spring semester Dean's List. Malia Mancini, also from North Tustin, was named to the Dean's List at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, College of Letters and Science.

Bryan Gilman of Orange was named to the spring semester Dean's List at St. Norbert College in De Pere, Wisconsin. Brandon DeRosa, also from Orange, was recognized by the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Marquette University, Milwaukee, named Orange's Ryan Osker to its Dean's List; Osker is pursuing a doctorate in physical therapy. David Holloman of Orange graduated from Marquette, earning a master of science in nursing.



Nature reclaimed the mine pit abandoned 60 years ago; it is now home to native plants and wildlife. Chandler LLC wants to bury it with construction waste.

"New dump" continued from page 1

ect location within a floodplain and potential future land uses. It also noted aesthetics, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, noise, transportation, and the proximity to Oakridge School.

Another dump for Orange?

Those concerns mirrored the unease expressed by the public in letters and at the hearing. Of specific interest to Orange residents is the proposed dump site's location. It is less than a halfmile from the construction waste stockpiled at the former Sully-Miller property. While that site was never permitted, the owner, Milan Capital, is now calling it an Inert Debris Engineered Fill Operation. Milan allowed Chandler to dump construction waste there. No records were kept of what was dumped. Whether it was inert or contaminated is now under investigation by the Local Enforcement Agency, the Orange County authority that regulates IDEFOs.

The Orange City Council also expressed its concerns about another construction waste dump within city limits. At the same time the Water Board was reviewing Chandler's original MND, the city hired a consultant to do the same. As reported in the Jan. 10, 2023 council meeting, "it raised a lot of questions." Council members considered attending the scheduled public hearing on the MND to voice their concerns as private citizens. The thencity attorney recommended that the council wait for the Water Board's decision to see "how well it answered their questions."

The Environmental Impact Report may raise new questions or



Footprint for proposed dump

answer those the MND didn't. Chandler's request for a waste discharge permit from the Water Control Board is discretionary. It can say no. The board may also require the property owner to get discretionary approval from the City of Orange.

VPWL traditions continue



Lorena Shaver, Circle of Friendship recipient

Villa Park Women's League held its first meeting on Sept. 30, 1969. The League was formed "to work toward community improvement with emphasis on schools, safety, beautification, communication and social fellowship."

On June 8 of this year, the Women's League introduced its 2024-25 board to carry on the 55-year tradition: President Terri Vernon; Vice President Lainey Stern; Program Chair Anita Kantak; Community/Philanthropy Co-chairs Stephanie Abou Jaoude and Cecile Wight; Treasurer Candy Carlberg; Recording Secretary Marilyn Liu; Membership Chair Risa Scott; Parliamentarian Eva



Cecile Wight, Community Service Award recipient

Wyszkowski.

As is also a long-standing tradition, the Community Service Award, established in 1971 to honor an "active resident in the community, as well as other service organizations," was presented to Cecile Wight.

The Circle of Friendship Award, a tradition since 1995, was presented to Lorena Shaver for her ability to "promote friendship, encourage, foster and cultivate activities that will unite women in the furtherance of the league."

For information about the League and its many activities, see vpwl.org.

Dems announce July meeting

Central OC Dems will present a speaker from Planned Parenthood at its Wednesday, July 24, meeting to provide an update on abortion rights in these post-Roe days. On a separate note, Tustin School Board Trustees Allyson Muniz Damikolas and Jonathan Stone, and California State Senator Josh Newman will discuss the state of public education in OC. Doors open, snacks and shmooze at 6:30 p.m.; meeting at 7 p.m.

Meetings are held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church at 1221 Wass St. in Tustin. Central OC Dems is not affiliated with St. Paul's. For information, see CentralOCDems.com.



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The street where we live

Dear Editor:

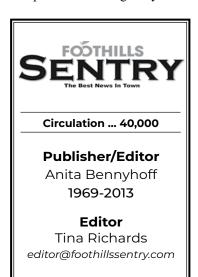
As are the rest of my neighbors, I am shocked by the unanimous vote to approve modern 48 multistory homes on Katella and Cambridge, where the current AT&T building is located. Why the city council refused to heed the recommendations and denials of this project, by both the Orange Design Review Committee and the Planning Commission, is unfathomable.

In an era of an enormous city budget deficit, I am surprised that this commercially zoned property was allowed to have its zoning changed to housing. More tax money is generated by commercial sites than housing. These homes will impact traffic on an already challenging corner, and during the Santa Ana Winds season, will allow fourth story decks to have their furniture and belongings blow into six-plus lanes of traffic on Katella and the surrounding areas. When election season arrives, I will be voting my conscience regarding our city council and mayor.

Joyce Hays Orange

Dear Editor:

On May 28, our way and quality of life on E. Carleton Avenue changed forever for my neighbors, friends and me. Orange city officials, specifically the city council members, had the power to do right by their



Sports Editor Cliff Robbins sportseditor@att.net

Graphic Designer Jef Maddock

residents but instead cowed to developer Intracorp Homes.

I would like to thank the City of Orange Council members for completely disregarding our quality of life, home values, privacy and parking and traffic concerns.

Thank you for disappointing all of us who had faith in you to uphold the city's Small Lot Subdivision Guidelines and Municipal Codes.

Thank you for showing the lack of compassion for your hard working, taxpaying, existing residents and for choosing a foreign developer over us.

Thank you for teaching my neighbors, friends and me that we can no longer have faith or trust in our city officials.

And specifically, thank you Kathy Tavoularis for showing us how the game of politics is played.

Lastly, thank you for robbing me of my pride of ownership and the pride I had for the past 20 years to tell friends and family "I live in Orange, come and visit!" That's all gone now, and been replaced with embarrassment.

Janet Majick Orange

Dear Editor:

express my disappointment with the Orange City Council for approving a housing development at the corner of Katella and Cambridge.

Intracorp presented a plan to build 48 two- and three-story (with rooftop decks) units on the AT&T lot (roughly 2.7 acres). The City of Orange Design Review DID NOT approve the plan, the Planning Commission DID NOT approve this plan, but the City Council (unanimously) approved the plan. How can it be? This doesn't make sense.

The council listened to many residents' concerns, but set those concerns aside. They listened to a company that wants to make money and has no concerns regarding the neighborhood. They will build and move on to the next project.

I am not against the building of homes on the AT&T property; but so much more could have been done to help out the City of Orange residents.

David Stuetzel

life styles. So sad!

Hope we all remember these council members and the mayor of Orange next election day. Although too late for those Orange residents who pleaded with the council at the meeting.

Laurence Hamlin Orange

Dear Editor:

I am absolutely heartbroken that the city council approved this project; it was denied by the Design Review Committee and the Planning Commission. It did not meet the requirements in the SmallLotSubdivisionGuidelines. The planner told us over and over that there were some things left up to interpretation. What? Why weren't they enforced? 48 homes on 2.7 acres. Not low income, but a big million dollar-plus price tag for each. And an HOA.

We all read the guidelines, and could not understand how anyone could misread the basics for Neighborhood Context/Scale and Massing: do not build twostory homes next to single-story homes. "Small lot subdivision development should follow the established size, shape, and form of the surrounding neighborhood through the use of similar proportions and details."

We've got to live with twostory homes 10 feet from our back walls. And a lot of shade and zero privacy. Next are the threestory homes with rooftop decks. We will have to find a way to deal with more noise and light, and stuff flying off those fourth floor decks during Santa Ana Wind events. Not enough parking, so they will gravitate to our street. No sidewalks or driveways in this development.

The applicant has all of the rights. Existing neighborhoods do not. The city council met with the applicant. Did they set up a time to meet with us? No. Some met with the mayor. It was difficult to set up a meeting with our own council person, and it ended up being a phone conference the morning of the council meeting. Their minds were made up to support this project. When your own council person suggests to the developer that they should dedicate something at the project to our first female mayor, we knew she/they were all going to vote yes.

The traffic study was a complete joke. There is an entrance on Katella and on Cambridge, and it will be okay to turn left and right out of both of those driveways, even when they are so close to the Katella/Cambridge signal. It is hard to turn left going out of our street, and then add this project and the blind curve, and you've got accidents. One council person asked the developer how many concessions were made for the neighbors? The developers said 50. No concessions were made for the neighbors, they were changes made to the plans to meet the guidelines that were enforced. No rebuttal for us. The developer told them, and us, that they are involved in the community and that they met with numerous neighbors at their homes and coffee shops. Not true. They met with one neighbor multiple times because their house will be impacted greatly by two homes behind it. Their garden will be in the shade. I am sad to say that our city council and the planning

department totally failed where this project is concerned. They failed to protect our privacy and our own slice of Old Towne charm, let alone our property values.

Jamie Fingal Orange

Dear Editor:

I wish to address the Orange City Council's May 28 meeting, where the council unanimously approved Intracorp's 901 E. Katella project. The approval means putting 48 two- and threestory homes in that little lot -- 10 feet from our backyards, much to the dismay of residents. Neighbors have worked months to rally against this horrible proposal. My neighbors have spent countless hours, time and money trying to stop this proposal from happening. It is so disappointing that our voices were never heard. Sure, the mayor says he met with us and listened to our concerns, but actions speak louder than words.

How can the Design Review Committee deny the proposal twice, and the Planning Commission as well, and we end up with the 6-0 unanimous vote to approve this project? The council put \$ over people! It is a shame and a sham. We have been fighting this for over six months, and it is so disheartening at this final decision and vote.

At the meeting which lasted until midnight, the council members only asked Intracorp minor questions, and agreed with everything they claimed, without doing their own research. The design does not even meet the city's Small Lot Guidelines. This is going to set a bad precedence for future development projects, where commercially zoned land can be converted so easily for housing in Orange. What is the point of these review committees if that is the case, and the council holds the final power and say?

The council's request for a tree program for the East Carleton residents, implementing permit parking on the street and a twoyear traffic study, post-build, does very little to address the concerns and problems that will result with this planned development. In addition, these contingency items are putting it again on the backs of the existing Orange residents to implement, not on the developer to change their bad development plan that will cause privacy concerns, increased parking issues and traffic problems. It is an absolute ludicrous vote. Profit over people are the results. We

scare tactic of AB2011 bias them into approving the plan as revised (minimally). Realistically, the space is way too small for a large high-density high-rise building. According to the 2021-29 Housing Element that was already approved and reapproved by the State of California on January 2, 2024, the City of Orange has met and exceeded its allocation requirement of the number of housing units planned (including low income).

The proposed plan DOES NOT meet the Small Lot Subdivision Guidelines. If the council members truly listened and cared, they could have approved the project with the condition of having Intracorp make further revisions to adhere to the guidelines set forth by the City of Orange. In their approval, each council member said pretty much the same thing, it was the lesser of two evils. If the city would just have told us that from the start, it would have saved everyone lost time that could have been spent with family at home or being more productive at work. I have lost faith in the system, and believe that big business will always win over the little guys.

Rosalie Huynh Orange

Dear Editor:

If only there were words to describe the frustration I feel towards our city council for not listening to the Carleton Avenue residents and, instead, unanimously approving a housing project that will forever change our neighborhood.

The rich Intracorp developers seemed to know their project was a slam dunk from the beginning, as they could care less that both the City Planning Commission and Design Review Committee voted NO on the project. All they needed were yes votes from Dan Slater and company, and they had that in the bag. This sets such a dangerous precedent, as now basically any commercially zoned area in Orange can be redesignated as residential for new high-rise, million-dollar, small lot homes. The very next DAY after the council approval meeting, the neighboring bank listed themselves "for sale." This will happen again and again across the city. But since it's not directly impacting the council members' neighborhoods, they're more than happy to approve these completely congested housing projects. Our privacy, our street parking, our safety when turning onto an already congested road,

I am writing this letter to

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Published on the last Tuesday of each month and distributed to residences, businesses, libraries and civic centers.

> Printing by Advantage, Inc.

714-532-4406 Fax: 714-532-6755 foothillssentry.com 1107 E. Chapman Ave., #207 Orange, CA 92866 [©]Foothills Sentry 2024

Orange

Dear Editor:

On May 28 the City Council of Orange voted to allow 48 homes to be built on the old AT&T property at Katella and Cambridge.

It is a devastating blow to those residents of Carleton Avenue, where the two to three-story homes will be built in their back yards thus changing the landscape forever.

A large number of residents of both Carleton and the surrounding neighborhood pleaded with the council not to allow this.

Their pleas fell on deaf ears. The entire council voted to build! It's hard to understand the lack of compassion and sensitivity these council members displayed. Residents of Carleton and the surrounding area are now faced with dramatic changes in their are in complete shock, sadness and mourning.

Jenny Tom Orange

Dear Editor:

This is in response to the Orange City Council approving the 901 E. Katella development by Intracorp. The process DOES NOT work. My neighbors and I spent hundreds and hundreds of hours collectively working for six months doing research, printing signs, making packets, dropping off over 2,500 letters to surrounding neighborhoods, and attending four extremely lengthy meetings, late into the night on a weeknight, skipping dinners. The thought was that if we gave good information, the city would make an educated decision based upon all our findings.

However, the city let Intracorp's

just made a horrific turn for the worse. And it's our city council leaders to blame.

Katie Polzer Orange

Cash ciaos

Dear Editor:

Councilwoman Arianna Barrios is proposing to tax students at Chapman University \$100, and students at Santiago Canyon College, \$25 each. This is her solution to balance the city's budget, which is showing a \$19 million deficit. Students are already struggling to build themselves a better life without having to pay even more because Arianna Barrios can't think of better ways to balance the city's budget.

I am a trustee at Rancho Santiago Community College District, and I strongly object to Arianna Barrios' attempt to balance her city's budget on the backs of my struggling students.

Phillip Yarbrough North Tustin

Ed. note: At the May 28 council meeting, Barrios reported that SCC was off limits.

Dear Editor:

We cannot allow our vital first responder police and fire departments to be compromised, and even with a fixed income, I'm all for increased taxes. This, providing the city stops rewarding outside contractors with the often overly priced bids. Additionally, eliminate fireworks and other unnecessary events, some that can do more harm than good. Consider the police and firefighters that have gone through extensive training to assist us when in need. Unjustly relieving them from their duties, and possibly into dire financial situations, is horribly unfair.

Use volunteers to do some of the city work. Recall what JFK said, "Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country."

Stephen Tyler Orange

Helter skelter shelter

Dear Editor:

In the tapestry of my family's life, companion animals have woven themselves in various forms—dogs, cats, bunnies and more. My affinity for these furry

"Orange budget"

Senior Center saved

continued from page 1

One service that drew support

from community members and

council members alike was the Or-

ange Senior Center. A \$224,000

expenditure, the center provides

socializing, classes, workshops,

meals and other resources to the

city's aging population. Many of

them came to the meeting to plead

that she was struggling with de-

pression after the loss of her hus-

band. Advised to try socializing

with peers to help her cope, she

decided the senior center would

she said. Later, the exercise class-

es offered there helped her recov-

"The senior center saved me,"

The center avoided the chop-

Resident Linda Hicks related

for the center's survival.

be a good place to start.

er from knee surgery.

me to volunteer at OC Animal Care, the county shelter in Tustin. Even after I left, my bond with the shelter remained strong, through regular communication with friends who continue to dedicate their time there. However, amidst the camaraderie and shared love for animals, a stark reality persists—the shelter grapples with a perpetual shortage of animal care attendants (ACAs), the frontline troops of animal welfare.

friends is a commitment that led

ACAs shoulder a myriad of responsibilities crucial for the well-being of shelter animals. From cleaning kennels and feeding, to providing walks and playtime, their role is indispensable. Yet, despite their dedication and tireless efforts, there simply aren't enough of them. The shelter's budget has seen steady increments, but the allocation seems to veer away from what truly matters—the proper care of animals.

Staffing decisions mirror the priorities of any organization. If a city council cares about parks, it allocates resources to create and maintain green spaces. Similarly, a school board's commitment to science education leads to well-equipped laboratories and qualified educators. In the realm of animal welfare, the priority should naturally be the wellbeing of shelter animals and their successful adoption into forever homes.

The numbers reveal a stark reality. With only 16 ACAs currently employed, and just half of them on duty each day, the shortfall is glaring. Considering leave, the average number of

attendants present on any given

day dwindles to around seven.

This pales in comparison to the

recommended 26 ACAs outlined

in the shelter's own Strategic

Plan-a figure derived from

the guidelines the Association

of Shelter Veterinarians, the

National Animal Care & Control

Association, and the Humane

It's not merely a matter of

numbers; it's about the quality

of care these animals receive.

Seven ACAs cannot possibly

shoulder the workload of 26. The

repercussions are felt daily-

filthy kennels, animals deprived

of socialization and exercise, and

potential adopters left waiting, or

Despite repeated calls for

action, the shortfall persists.

The Orange County Grand Jury

echoed concerns about staffing

inadequacies in its 2023 report,

yet tangible solutions remain

elusive. The disconnect between

those on the front lines and the

leadership exacerbates the plight

of shelter animals, who ultimately

pay the price for this negligence.

Animals are labeled "behavior

challenged" and "fearful" and

ultimately euthanized, all because

shelter management and county

In a county where pet

ownership is cherished and

animal welfare is a shared

concern, we should not turn a

blind eye to the unacceptable state

of the animal shelter. The county

board of supervisors can, and

should, do better, by investing in

the frontline staff needed to look

supervisors have failed them.

worse, leaving empty-handed.

Society of the United States.

after shelter animals and serve the visitors who adopt them. To stay informed, please visit OCShelter.com and sign up for email updates.

Jackie Lamirande Past Animal Care volunteer

Park place

Dear Editor:

In an ideal world, all trash would be recycled, and there would be no need for landfills. However, in a time of severe urban space constraints and limited resources, closed landfills present excellent opportunities for reclamation due to their size, location, and cost-effective nature. Reclaimed landfills in Southern California offer large open spaces that are often the only affordable land available and are not suitable for housing development. Could such an approach be the solution for the 40-acre Villa Park dump site in East Orange?

Over the past two decades, many parks in SoCal have been developed on reclaimed landfill sites. Despite their origin, these parks have proven to be valuable community assets. While a capped landfill may not be the first choice for a park location, it is noteworthy that numerous successful city parks across the country have been repurposed from former dumpsites.

According to a survey conducted by the Center for City Park Excellence, major U.S. cities already feature approximately 4,500 acres of landfill parks. These recreational sites not only

enhance the quality of life for nearby residents, but also have the potential to generate revenue for the city or county. These spaces can generate revenue through rental fees, program fees, special events, concessions, sponsorships, advertising, tax-related initiatives. and By leveraging these revenue streams, parks and recreation departments can enhance their financial sustainability, while providing valuable services to the community.

The former Villa Park dump site in East Orange, which has been inactive since 1966, represents an untapped resource that could be repurposed for parks and recreational use.

Transforming this derelict space into a vibrant community asset would not only benefit local residents, but also provide a new source of revenue for the city. Whether operated directly by the city or leased to a third party specializing in sports and entertainment venues, the potential for the site is significant and could be a major success for the city administration.

As the city seeks to address both the need for additional park spaces and generate new revenues, the reclamation of the Villa Park dump site offers a promising solution that aligns with these goals. Embracing this opportunity could lead to a transformative outcome that enhances the well-being of residents and advances the city's economic prosperity.

Mark Moore Orange

We still got fun

Concerts in the Park, the Tree Lighting ceremony, and Treats in the Streets will all continue this year, but with the expectation that talks will continue with the Kiwanis, OC Master Chorale and downtown businesses, respectively, to pick up those events going forward.

The 3rd of July fireworks show will also continue, but will likely be scaled back.

Santiago Creek cleanup will be discontinued, with volunteers, who already tend to the creek, filling in the gap.

The crossing guard program is being defunded due to the high number of vacancies within its ranks. Instead it will be OUSD's job to recruit volunteer crossing guards if it wants them.

One of the few items council members agreed to keep was the vacant positions within the police department. The department currently has approximately 165 sworn officers and is budgeted for 170. Police Chief Dan Adams told the council that he had been having difficulty sustaining numbers above 165, but that the department could adequately meet the city's needs with that number. freeze that's currently holding many city positions vacant. If those positions remain unfilled, the remaining balance would return to the city's general fund at the end of the fiscal year.

Although cuts were made, the council is still far from where it needs to be. Ultimately, they have until the end of June to approve a balanced budget, though the likelihood of doing that through cuts alone is slim.

During the May 28 late night discussion, the council identified about \$5 million in revenue enhancements, including credit card fees, parking enforcement, business license fee penalties and road repair funding from trash hauler CR&R.

None of those will have an immediate impact. The fall-back position is to fill the budget gap with a one-time-only transfer of reserve funds.

"We all have our priorities.

"City sales tax" continued from page 1

level they are now, others aren't so keen to shell out even another few pennies until they know how we got here to begin with.

How'd we get here?

"People need to know what happened, why are we in the hole?" resident Laura Thomas asked the council "Something led up to this. Why did we not see this coming? A forensic audit must done. That should be a top priority. We need to know the truth and you need to tell the citizens."

Councilwoman Arianna Barrios has been lobbying for a forensic audit for several months. The idea may now be getting some traction.

Another member of the public wanted to know why the residents seemed to be the first place the council looked for money. He mentioned a pilot program in Providence, Rhode Island, that will see Brown University pay the city \$174 million over the next two decades. from around \$450 million to \$1.5 billion that could potentially be engaged in a similar program.

Resident Eddie Albright was also in favor of seeing Chapman pay its share before asking residents to pay. "One in five people in the United States is living from credit card to credit card in debt. They can't even afford to buy groceries and now we're going to tax them more. I think it's unfair, I think it's unjust."

Oversight, not hindsight

If the council does vote to move forward with the increase, members emphasized the importance of oversight. The majority of cities with similar tax initiatives established a citizen oversight committee responsible for ensuring funds are spent on what the public was told they would be spent on.

While each city sets its own requirements for committee membership, common elements include someone who opposed and someone who supported the initiative, individuals with financial backgrounds, and members of the senior community. The city has until the end of June to make a final decision. If the council chooses to move forward with the tax initiative, paperwork must be filed with the Registrar of Voters by June 30.

ping block but, as would be the theme for the night, it came with a caveat.

Santiago Canyon College President Jeannie Kim has been in early talks with city officials about including the senior center in its Older Adult Education program through its non-credit side. This inclusion could mean an expansion of classes available to patrons of the center plus state funding to help support it.

No cuts to Orange PD

Still, the council chose not to include the police in the hiring

and as we saw tonight not one of us was willing to support all the staff recommendations," said Mayor Dan Slater toward the end of the June 11 meeting.

"Everything from saving crossing guards to events to the senior center to public safety. We couldn't get there," he said. The only way we're going to get there is to pass some kind of a sales tax measure."

Orange has several large nonprofit, and therefore nontaxable, entities such as CHOC, Chapman University and UCI Hospital with annual revenue ranging

No good options

"We have some very tough decisions that I don't think anyone wants to make," Councilman Jon Dumitru summarized. "But in the end, we have to leave the city more fiscally sound than we found it.

"We have to ensure to the public we're not going to spend like drunken sailors. That's not the goal here. The goal is to get some breathing room."

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Book boosters and Fran fans

Fran Williams of Silverado was the guest of honor at a Friends of the Library fundraiser, June 2, at the Modjeska home of Geoffrey and Sarah Sarkissian.

Andrew Tonkovich, chair of the Inter-Canyon League's (ICL) Friends of the Library Committee, organized the event to recognize retiring chair Williams for her many years of service, and to raise money for continuing special programs at the Library of the Canyons.

Prior to an outdoor dinner of homemade chili, corn bread and salads, guests were free to explore the extensive Sarkissian garden(s) while Connie Carter and Geoff provided a serenade of classic Everly Brothers and other hits.

Addressing the crowd, Tonkovich thanked everyone for coming, and pointed out the do-it-yourself nature of the evening's event: volunteers donated all food, music and decor.

Williams then continued the theme by recalling when Orange County declared bankruptcy, and the Silverado Library was targeted for closure. But she and others got the county to keep the local branch open four days a week

with community volunteer help. So, effectively, it became a do-ityourself library.

Emcee Tonkovich then turned auctioneer for the evening's final activity: soliciting bids on the special desserts donated by canyon pastry chefs. Among the offerings fetching anywhere from \$15 to \$60 each: Ganachecovered Napoleon by Brittney Kuhn; Natalie Garth's Pecan Pie Cheesecake; Tamara Beauchamp's Tahini Dark Chocolate Tart w/flaky salt; Rusty Morris's Death by Chocolate Brownies; Ted Wright's Caramel Pecan Kringle; Sue McIntire Kommer's One and All Old Fashioned Banana Cream Pie AND Mo Canyon, Mo Bettah Coconut Cream Pie; Sarah Sarkissian's "Friends of Booklava" baklava; Boxcar Benny's Peanut Butter Peaks by Mary Smith; Jaime Campbell's Chocolate Chip Canyon Dozen; and Dayna Edwards's Chaotic Canyon Spice Cake Cookies.

Tonkovich estimated that the 60 or so attendees raised about half the committee's fundraising goal for the year that evening.

Speaking of libraries

At the June 4 ICL meeting, Branch Manager Laura Blasingham thanked Friends of the Library for paying for craft supplies and toys at the library. Family/allages presentations in July include marionettes, magic, juggling and live animals. See ocpl.org/libraries/lotc for details.

Phone phun

Joanne Hubble reports that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) tentatively "dismissed with prejudice" AT&T's application to no longer be a Carrier Of Last Resort (COLR).

The proposed decision says that AT&T did not follow the COLR rules. But it also says, "Given the age of its COLR rules, as well as changes in the marketplace, it is appropriate for the Commission to consider whether its COLR rules should be revised, and, if so, how the rules should be revised." If the rules change, AT&T would have to wait a year before submitting another application.

The CPUC also criticized AT&T for implying that COLR status prevents it from replacing copper phone lines with VoIP, wireless, or fiber, "The Commission does not have rules preventing AT&T from retiring copper facilities."

The Bridges of Orange County

This is the current status of Silverado bridge replacement projects, according to OC Public Works (OCPW).

Just west of the Silverado Community Center: The design is complete; OCPW is seeking rightof-way clearance from Caltrans prior to construction authorization. Construction is anticipated to start in spring 2025.

At Ladd Canyon: The design is at 100% and currently under county review. OCPW will then seek design approval from Caltrans and ROW clearance prior to construction authorization. Construction is anticipated to start in fall 2025.

Just east of Oak Lane: Construction is anticipated to start in fall 2025.

WATER DISTRICT



Matilija poppy

Egg plant

A couple of months ago, groups of gray-green shrubs began appearing along lower Silverado Canyon Road. Growing to almost 10 feet tall, stalks produced white and yellow blossoms resembling "sunny side up" fried eggs.

Those plants are Matilija poppies ("ma-TIL-a-hah"), whose flowers, up to nine inches across, are the largest of any California native plant.

The Matilija poppy is named after a legendary Chumash chief of Ventura County. It was nominated for state flower of California in 1890, but lost to its smaller orange-blossomed cousin, the California poppy.

There are actually two Matilija poppy species, but the more common one in our area is Coulter's Matilija poppy, whose flower buds are smooth, not hairy. It grows naturally in only a few places, because it is very picky about soil and climate. Over the summer, the flowers turn into brown seed pods that resemble kiwi fruit, after which the plant dies back and resprouts in the spring.

Although Matilija poppy flowers look a lot like eggs, the two are not necessarily interchangeable. When making lemon meringue pie, for instance, substituting white poppy petals for egg whites usually yields a very thin, dry meringue. But on the plus side, if the filling is made with Matilija yolks, it will contain no cholesterol.

Santiago Hills landscape fees increase

Residents of Santiago Hills will see their assessment for common ground landscape maintenance rise by \$7.90 per year for singlefamily homes and \$5.61 for condominiums.

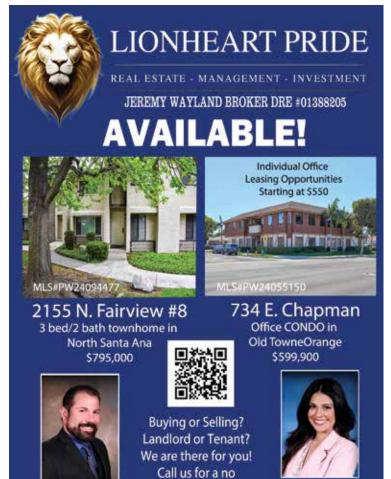
Total annual fees include an original 1987 assessment of \$369.44 for single-family dwellings, and \$221.66 for condos. That assessment had a cap, and cannot go higher. Landscaping costs, however, have continued to rise. In 2015, voters approved an overlay to cover the cost gap. That additional fee is subject to an annual 3% cost of living increase. The 2025 assessment will increase to \$271.17 per singlefamily unit and \$192.53 per condo. The combined assessment, levied on residents' property tax bills, is \$640.61 and \$414.19, respectively.

Santiago Hills is one of two communities (Sycamore Crossing is the other) in Orange subject to a landscape assessment. When those tracts were built, the city agreed to take responsibility for landscape maintenance, with the attendant costs covered by property owners via assessments. In most other planned developments, common grounds are maintained by HOAs.

The proposed Fiscal Year 2024-25 (FY25) budget also includes funding to replace aging landscaping and infrastructure over time. The city has been working with residents to develop an environmentally sustainable renovation plan.

Projected revenue for 2025 is \$938,814, which includes \$26,557 from Rancho Santiago Community College District. Expenditures are expected to be \$938,086. Excess funds will supplement the reserve fund balance, currently at \$523,760.





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Foundation withdraws temporary housing facility in residential neighborhood

By Tina Richards

The Illumination Foundation has abandoned its plans to turn a five-bedroom home on Hewes Street into temporary housing for up to five families at a time, citing neighborhood opposition as a factor in its decision to look elsewhere.

A "For Sale" sign was posted at the property at 688 Hewes Street on June 12.

The Foundation purchased the property in January, and began converting the bedrooms into small independent living units without alerting either the City of Orange or the neighbors of its intentions. The plan was to provide transitional housing for families (up to 30 people) for 90 days at a time. A workshop on the grounds would be converted to an office. Apparently unaware that it needed city approvals and/or permits,

the Foundation was preparing to move in the first residents in early March.

Suspicious activity

Neighbors suspected something unusual was happening when they saw multiple mattresses and refrigerators being moved in. They began asking questions, learned that the premises were slated to be temporary housing for multiple families, and attended the Feb. 27 city council meeting to express their concerns.

That was the first the city had heard of the Illumination Foundation, or its plans for the home.

Two public meetings ensued, with the Foundation explaining the need for such housing and claiming that the city had to treat the home as it would any other residence, that it did not need city permission to proceed. The Foundation reported that it owned four



The house at 688 Hewes will not become a temporary shelter for up to five families at a time. The Illumination Foundation is selling the property.

Fairhaven Memorial Day event brings observers together



The OC Concert Band played patriotic music ahead of the formal program.



Linda Martin, left, and Patricia Pokonny-Merickel set up a B-17 model in a display dedicated to a generation of Rosie the Riveters.



similar homes in other Orange County cities, had opened them without notifying those jurisdictions, and had been operating them for some time with "no trouble."

Those meetings were attended by Mayor Dan Slater, Councilwoman Ana Gutierrez, Assistant City Manager Susan Galvan and planning staff. They listened to the Foundation's presentation and a litany of resident objections. The neighbors did not believe a single-family community to be the right place for a temporary housing facility that would produce an influx of "strangers" and up to 20 cars at a time, create noise and ignore fire safety.

A scramble to catch up

Caught off guard, just as the Hewes Street community was, city representatives told meeting attendees that they would "ask a lot of questions" and do everything possible to ensure the health and safety of the community.

The meetings served only to further inflame the neighbors. They put up large banners on Hewes expressing their opposition to the multi-family housing proposal and soliciting community support. They opened a communications channel with city staff; groups of Hewes Street neighbors attended every subsequent city council meeting to keep the issue simmering.

Meanwhile, city planners provided the Foundation with a series of "pre-occupancy concerns and conditions that it would apply to any other residential dwelling of the same type in the same zone.'

An exercise room was converted into a bedroom without a permit; a kitchenette and air conditioning unit were installed without permits; bedrooms must be of a certain size to house more than two people; the proposed workshop/office was illegal because it was not a resident's home-based business. Sprinklers are required.



Emergency egress was unclear in all bedrooms. Due to the number of expected occupants, a manual fire alarm and fire hydrant were required.

Illuminations Foundation notified the city, June 11, that it would not pursue the transitional living facility at 688 Hewes due to the magnitude of neighborhood opposition, which it, reportedly, had never before experienced. It also cited a desire to "work with the city, not against it. "



Orange Mayor Dan Slater was a featured speaker at the event.

Fairhaven Memorial Park commemorated Memorial Day with a program of band music, song, speeches and salutes presented to a standing-room only crowd who overflowed the designated seat-

Matthew Noell on fife, and John Davis on drum, relive the Spirit of '76.

ing area and spread out with lawn chairs and blankets to the corners of the event area.

The May 28 event was accompanied with informational booths and displays.





Gold Spotted Oak Borer

Orange denies developer's appeal to approve incomplete housing project application

By Tina Richards

A developer's appeal to shortcircuit Orange's established process to approve housing project applications, was denied by the city council at a meeting called specifically to consider the issue, June 5.

Integral Communities, operating as "The Orange JCP Project Owner, LLC, Peter Vanek," owns a portion of The Village at Orange property, and wants to build 167 housing units with 42 ADUs (accessory dwelling units) where the closed JCPenney stands. Vanek submitted a land-use project application to the city planning department in June 2023. That application and two ensuing revisions (September 2023, February 2024) were deemed incomplete by planning staff.

Vanek claims his application is not incomplete. He asked the city to overrule planning staff's assessment and accept the paperwork without further delay. At issue is Orange JCP Project Owner's failure to apply for a General Plan Amendment (GPA) and zone change, and to redesignate the property's current commercial status to residential. Vanek, relying on recent state legislation that streamlines a developer's ability to build housing, says he doesn't need a GPA or zone change to proceed. The city's planning process says it does.

Subject to interpretation

After planning staff determined the builder's revised application to be incomplete, Vanek appealed to the Orange Planning Commission. Arguing that state legislation (SB330) precluded the need for a General Plan Amendment or zone change, the project's attorney insisted that his client had met all the necessary requirements.

The city's position is that SB330 does not override local General Plans and zoning, that jurisdictions are still required to apply appropriate development standards to each project. Without a General Plan Amendment or zone change, the property would become a legal (or illegal) non-

conforming use. That outcome is contrary to state law and public policy. Further, "nothing in the law says a city cannot process in a normal fashion an application that purports to have protections under the Housing Accountability Act." Orange is not precluded from requiring that a project submit the desired General Plan designation, zoning classification, and pay the attendant fees.

The planning commission denied the appeal May 20. Presuming that Vanek's company would take the appeal to the city council, staff made the necessary arrangements to hear it -- before the appeal was received.

Fast and furious

State law requires that a jurisdiction reply to a builder's appeal within 60 days. Vanek's original appeal was filed April 10. The 60-day window was due to close on June 7. To meet that deadline, the city posted public notices of the pending appeal (as required) and attempted to find a hearing date when enough council members (four) could attend to make a quorum.

The appeal to the council was filed June 3 and notice of the prearranged June 5 meeting went out the next day. Councilmembers Ana Gutierrez, Kathy Tavoularis, John Gyllenhammer and Mayor Dan Slater were in attendance. Jon Dumitru arrived later, before the meeting ended.

Project Attorney Travis Van Ligten was angry. "I'm not prepared," he told the council. "I only had 24 hours' notice. You're supposed to have 10-days' notice. I object to this hearing. It doesn't follow due process, it's a sham."

When told that notice had indeed been provided 10 days before, via a posting on the property, he pointed out that, "You can't give notice of an appeal before the appeal is filed."

Lost in the ozone

Nonetheless, he stated his client's basis for the appeal. The project, he said, did not need to ask for a General Plan Amendment and zone change because those check-off boxes did not ap-

pear on a government-required list of objectives, and were not found in the city's planned development application. Because the government code does not mention either procedure, those changes are not required, he insisted. "We are not seeking a zone change," he said. "We don't have to."

Further, he noted, the letters his client received from the city were signed by Senior Planner Chad Ortlieb and not by Planning Director Russ Bonim. Because communications between Orange and the developer are, according to written procedures, supposed to come from the planning director, Ortlieb was not authorized to sign them. The letter, Ligten stressed, was invalid.

"We receive hundreds of planning applications," Bonim pointed out. "Typically, the project planner acts on behalf of the director. It's common practice."

Following the rules

Ortlieb and Bonim explained that Orange JCP Project Owner, LLC, was advised early on of its need to ask for a General Plan Amendment and zone change. The city's land-use project application information packet includes a requirement to note the "existing" and "proposed" General Plan designation or zoning classification. Further, the need to identify the "proposed" designations and pay the appropriate fees was included in all three letters calling the application incomplete.

Staff assured the council that the planning application does refers to a GPA and zone change; that state legislation does not bar the city from following standard practices; and that, by law, "all development applications must still be processed in a manner that provides clarity, and that properties are correctly designated and classified."

The council denied the appeal in a unanimous vote. Dumitru asked if that meant the clock was restarted. "No," was the answer. The project application remains incomplete until all requirements are submitted.

Orange's oldest Boy Scout Troop turns out three new **Eagle Scouts**



From left, new Eagle Scouts, Casey Garcia, Paxton Lavigne and Will Carter.

Boy Scout Troop 241, founded in 1963 and the oldest troop in the City of Orange, recognized three new Eagle Scouts last month -Will Carter, Casey Garcia and Paxton Lavigne. The three were honored in a joint Eagle Ceremony, May 14 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, which has hosted Troop 241 for its weekly meetings for the past 36 years.

As part of earning their Eagle rank, each Scout is required to plan, lead and execute a service project that benefits a nonprofit organization.

Casey Garcia led a team of volunteers to build a cabinet to hold band instruments for the music department at St. Paul's Lutheran School. He starred on the Canyon High Comanche's varsity lacrosse and football teams. Garcia earned an academic and sports scholarship to Dominican University in San Rafael, California, where he will pursue a business degree.

Paxton Lavigne, who started as a Cub Scout at St. Paul's and bridged to Troop 241 when he became a Boy Scout, organized and oversaw the construction of four large mobile planter boxes for the students at the Savanna Elementary School District in Anaheim. He built them to be of varying heights so they could be used by kids of all ages, and put them on wheels so they could be rolled from classroom to classroom. Lavigne graduated summa cum laude from Orange Lutheran High, and will attend California Baptist University to study mechanical engineering.

Will Carter chose to build a Ga-Ga Ball Pit for Covenant Christian School. He recently graduated from Orange Lutheran High School, and will go to Chico State to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering.

Carter, Garcia and Lavigne are the 162nd, 163rd and 164th Scouts, respectively, to earn their Eagle Rank from Troop 241.

For more information about Boy Scout Troop 241 (ages 10-18), please visit troop241.org. Interested Cub Scouts (ages 5-10) can visit cubpack241.org.

Book Carnival to host book signing

Author John McNellis will discuss his crime thriller "Scout's Honor," Sunday, July 14 at the that owns property in Orange. Book Carnival.

McNellis is a former practic-

a real estate development firm novel and features complex, Tustin St.

ing lawyer and co-founder of flawed and morally questionable characters.

McNellis's talk begins at 2 p.m. "Scout's Honor" is his second The Book Carnival is at 348 S.





The Woman's Club of Orange donated \$1,000 to the Orange Public Library's History Center. Aida Cuevas, archivist and history librarian, left, receives the check from Woman's Club member Kathy Thomas.

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American Legion Post 132 welcomed the Nation of Patriots Flag Tour, June 6, wherein motorcyclists transport the American flag through all 50 states. The ride raises money to support veterans. The flag arrived in Orange from El Cajon, and was dispatched to its next stop in Cornell, California, the next day by riders from Post 132. The Orange stop netted about \$750 that will benefit veterans in California. Seen here, in front, is Mark Coleman, who ferried the flag to Orange; rear; from left, Scott Schaeffer, Nation of Patriots regional commander for Southern California; Representative Lou Correa (D-46th); Congresswoman Young Kim (R-40th) and Orange Mayor Dan Slater.



The Orange Woman's Club named its 2024-25 officers on June 17: from left, front row: Pat Hamilton, Linda Hicks, Rebecca Martinez, President Carol Allen, Kathleen Stevens, Carol Calderwood, Diana Correa; back row, from left: Diana Diaz, Susan Moore, Dorinda von Tersch, Susie Huber, Kathy Wilhelm and Marcie Scott. Not pictured, Terrie Richardson and Kathryn Host.

Graduates awarded music grants

The Orange County Friends of Music and the Orange Community Master Chorale awarded music grants ranging from \$500 to Parr Memorial Award. \$1,000 to six graduating seniors from local high schools. Grants were given to Mia Fuentes and Elmer Wences, Orange High; Isabela Reynoso, El Modena; Anna Scott, Orange Lu-

yon High. Edith Arinaga of Orange High received the Beverly

theran; and Vincent Logan, Can- nation by the students' respective vocal music directors, an academic review, and acceptance at a school of higher learning. The Chorale has been providing the grants since 2000 to further its mission to share music with all. by Orange Mayor Dan Slater at the city's 3rd of July Celebration.

The awards will be presented



The site of the planned Orange Heights development was engulfed in flames during the 2017 Canyon II fire.

By Tina Richards

As The Irvine Company prepares to break ground for a 1,180-unit housing project in East Orange, an army of residents is urging the builder and the city to complete an updated Environmental Impact Report before unleashing the bulldozers.

The group, No Orange Heights, has collected 15,496 signatures on a petition asking for a new EIR. Two dozen residents appeared at the May 28 Orange City Council meeting to command an hour's worth of public comments on the topic.

The Irvine Company has entitlements to build on the acreage at Jamboree and Santiago Canyon Road that were granted in 2005. The original project, called Santiago Hills II, was for 1,746 units on 496 acres. An EIR was produced and certified by the city. That project languished until 2016, when The Irvine Company came back with revised plans for 1,180 homes on 396 acres. No EIR was done at that time, as the 2005 document retained authority.

That EIR, however, is now almost 20 years old. Proponents of a new environmental study note that a lot has changed since then. Vehicle traffic has increased, and the state has changed its assessment criteria for determining those impacts. Housing developments to the north and south have squeezed native wildlife into smaller wild spaces and natural habitats. The site of the development currently connects Irvine and Peters Canyon Regional Parks and creates a corridor for local wildlife to move about. Most significant, however, is fire danger. The land where 1,180 houses will be built burned to cinders in the 2017 Canyon Fire 2. The blaze jumped the toll road, burned parts of Santiago Oaks Park, Irvine Park and decimated Peters Canyon. It burned to the edges of Santiago Hills and Cowan Heights. A number of homes in Cowan Heights were damaged, but it could have been worse. A firefighter on the scene reported that the community was spared because the wind changed.

With wildfires ravaging the State of California in recent years, Attorney General Rob Bonta has discouraged future developments in high-risk areas.

In 2022, he released a series of guidelines designed to mitigate threats, stating: "Residential developments in the wildland-urban interface and other wildfireprone areas can significantly increase the risks of wildfires and the related risk to public safety. Introducing more people via additional development increases the likelihood of fire ignition. Building housing in the wildlandurban interface puts more people in harm's way and may hinder evacuation routes and emergency access.

"CEQA requires that state and local agencies disclose and evaluate the significant environmental impacts of locating developments in areas susceptible to hazardous conditions – such as wildfire – and adopt all feasible mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate those impacts.

Sophia Zonni, a graduate of Orange Lutheran, completed her first year at Chapman University, and received a second music grant.

These awards require a nomi-

"The Attorney General's guidance is based on the California Department of Justice's experience reviewing and litigating planned development projects in wildfire-prone areas.'



Foothill grad receives P.E.O. STAR scholarship

Maddy Posner, a member of the Foothill High School 2024 graduating class, was selected to receive a \$2,500 STAR Scholarship from the P.E.O. Sisterhood. She was recommended by P.E.O. Chapter IE of Orange.

At Foothill High, Posner was the editor of *Knightlife*, the school newspaper; competed on the varsity tennis team and named Most Valuable Player two times. She is an International Baccalaureate candidate, and candidate for the Spanish Seal of Biliteracy.

She will attend Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania to pursue a degree in English. She will also play on the Swarthmore tennis team, write for the school newspaper, and be a member of Kehilah and OASIS.

The P.E.O. STAR Scholarship was established in 2009, and is awarded to women who exhibit excellence in leadership, academics, extracurricular activities, community service and demonstrate the potential for future success.

Chapter IE has been a part of the Orange community since it was organized in 1935.

To learn more about P.E.O., its educational philanthropies and see stories of women who have benefited from the programs, visit peointernational.org.



From left, Sheryl Franke, P.E.O. member; Maddy Posner; Marcia Reynolds, P.E.O member:

Orange Elks serve lunch and cleanup the creek

Orange Elks Lodge 1475 has been busy supporting the community.

Elks volunteers cooked and served lunch to 90 Taft Elementary sixth graders who will be promoted to junior high, plus the teachers and staff. Thirteen Elks served burgers, hot dogs, chips, cookies and drinks.

Lodge members later worked with the Santiago Greenway Alliance, cleaning Santiago Creek by collecting 10 bags of trash.





The Elks clean-up crew, ready to go to work at Santiago Creek.

Orange Elks stand at the ready to provide lunch for Taft Elementary students.

Taft Library dodges another threat

Two months after residents were assured by the city council that the Taft Library was not going to be sold, the building remained on the list of proposed cuts to help balance Orange's budget deficit.

The topic of what to cut came up towards the end of a very long council meeting, May 28. It was after 1 a.m. when the list was introduced.

"The Taft Library is still on the table," Mayor Dan Slater said. "We have to make or break this one."

Kathy Tavoularis immediately made a motion to sell it. She explained that the city has two other libraries, one two miles away and that there were no sacred cows in terms of cuts. Arianna Barrios seconded the motion.

Slater advised that he couldn't support that motion, that he wasn't ready to sell the library. John Gyllenhammer suggested waiting until December (the next round of prospective cuts) to make a decision. Jon Dumitru agreed that it should wait. Tavoularis said that if the council was taking the deficit seriously, it should be willing to make the hard decisions now.

She and Barrios were the only council members who voted yes. The motion was defeated 4-2 (Ana Gutierrez was absent).

The sale of the library has been tabled for now, but may reappear when the budget is revisited in December. It will depend on the city's financial status after the next few months of revenue enhancements and cuts to expenses.



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OUPSF puts funds to work



OUPSF boardmembers and OUSD trustees thank George Pla of Cordoba Corporation, center for his donation as a community partner.

The Orange Unified Public Schools Foundation (OUPSF) has been quietly making a positive impact on thousands of students and teachers, across 31 OUSD campuses

The organization was relaunched from the inactive Orange Education Fund, established as a nonprofit in 1995, to fund supplies and materials for students. The updated vision is to "mobilize the community to provide equitable opportunities for all of our students to learn creatively, think innovatively and collaborate effectively."

The board includes Frank Tucker, president; Anne Truex, vice president; Todd Hanson, treasurer; Amy Case, secretary; Nicol Jones, parliamentarian; Whitney Amsbary, OUSD liaison; Wendi Forrest, fundraising chair; Christine Deihl, marketing chair; Kennedy Schaal, grants, Ron Esparza and Ilia Rolon, board members.

The new board has worked with passion and commitment to build relationships within the community, striving to create opportunities for leaders and businesses to become partners for the betterment of students and schools.

To that end, in just one year, the board has, in partnership with Stadium Nissan, held a car raffle fundraiser and reached out to community partners, allowing OUPSF to award over \$100,000 in two rounds of grants to 128 teachers and staff during the 2023-24 school year.

A partnership established with the Hilbert Museum of California Art will transport students to view the Hilbert's extensive exhibitions. Another partnership with Chapman University allowed OUSD students to show-



The El Modena High boys soccer team received a grant from OUPSF for new equipment. In turn, they hosted a soccer camp for elementary and middle school students.

case their musical and artistic talents in Memorial Hall. A Home Depot partnership will help to create wellness centers at OUSD schools; three have already been established.

Funds have been provided to aid sports teams with needed equipment and uniforms. In return, those teams hold sports camps for elementary and/or middle school students. It is a win-win, as the older athletes benefit from the leadership opportunities, to train, coach and help the younger students. The younger athletes benefit from the guidance and experience of playing on a sport and being on a team.

OUPSF has entered a partnership with Cordoba Corp., whose founder George Pla, intends to make a direct impact for the underserved through sports.

A \$4,000 grant gave the El Modena High boys soccer program new equipment; they hosted a soccer camp for elementary and middle school students. At Orange High, new mats were provided for the wrestling team; they, in turn, introduced wrestling to younger students. Villa Park High's track and field team



The Villa Park High track and field program benefited from a monetary grant from OUPSF, and held an introductory camp for incoming middle school students.

received a grant for uniforms, and held a camp for in-coming Cerro Villa Middle School students.

The first joint venture was a new handball team at Richland High, the first sports team at the school. The team, with a coach and team T-shirts, made its first tournament appearance at the annual Knox-Barrera Handball Challenge, competing against other OUSD schools.

Tucker is enthusiastic about the upcoming year, and the many possibilities for growing community support and partnership opportunities, particularly with the OUSD CTE programs. The enrollment in these career pathways – aviation, culinary arts, health sciences and construction – is the largest in the state, and new partnerships would augment the programs.

OUPSF will operate Children's Street at the Orange International Street Fair, and host a Celebration of Schools in October. Board members are eager to share information about the revitalized organization, and suggest contacting them at oupsf.org.



JULY 2024





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Page 13



August 7

CPOC hosts day on firing range

Conservative Patriots of Orange County in coordination with Firearms Training Associates is offering a Basic Firearm Training opportunity, Saturday, July 13.

This one day program, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., is open to the first 36 people who sign up. A firearm will be provided. Cost is \$125 and includes lunch.

There is an additional cost for ammunition, ranging from \$45-\$90 depending on the firearm.

Register online: FTATV.com. Be sure to state in comment section you are a CPOC member.

CPOC is not meeting over the summer but will get together with a Low Down Hoe Down, Saturday, Aug. 17 at the El Rodeo Equestrian Center in Brea.

Shop Orange program offers cash back

A new program launched by the City of Orange and the Orange Chamber of Commerce encourages people to shop local by offering a 5% cash back reward for purchases made at any one of the city's 663 businesses.

To participate, download "open rewards: shop local" on the Apple App or Google store and select Orange. Users may link a credit card to the app or upload a copy of the receipt. Cash rewards may be redeemed via Zelle, Venmo, Paypal or by check. Participating businesses include retail, restaurants and services. Car dealerships are not included.

Enter "shoporange" in the voucher redemption tab and get \$5 free.

July 18, featuring Magic Castle magician and mentalist Brady Glen.

merce will hold its Board Installa-

tion and Dinner Gala on Thursday

The gala celebrates new and returning board members and will serve as the Chamber's annual meeting.

Awards for the 2024 Board Member of the Year, Ambassador of the Year and Chamber Champion will also be presented.

Tickets are \$75 for members, \$85 for nonmembers. Table sponsorships, including seating for 10, an identifying logo, recognition in the program and on stage, are \$995. Admission includes dinner and unlimited beer and wine. Cocktails will be available for purchase. A live auction will round out the evening.

The event begins at 6 p.m. at The Villa, 510 E. Katella Ave. The dress code is black and white cocktail attire. Tickets may be purchased at OrangeChamber.com.

Stone Soul

6:30 p.m. Grijalva Park

August 8

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy

6:00 p.m. Mile Square Regional Park



August 15

The FABBA Show

6:00 p.m. Bluff Park at Salt Creek Beach

August 17

Doggful Dead / Hempstring Orchestra

6:00 p.m. Silverado Fairgrounds



Jimmy's Buffet

6:00 p.m. Bluff Park at Salt Creek Beach

September 21

the Brother Jonathan / the Simon Sez Revue

6:00 p.m. Silverado Fairgrounds



RoboPlay blends fun with tech savvy

By Andie Mills

Over 100 students in 24 teams from six schools, laptops and robots in tow, converged on the El Modena High campus for the second annual RoboPlay Challenge Competition.

The competition is designed for students in grades 3-6 to showcase their real-world math, programming and problem-solving skills. Students must devise and deploy a robotic solution to complete a specific challenge within 10 minutes, working as a team.

High school student helpers provided assistance, while adult judges marked scores.

It sounds serious, but the teams – with clever names, such as Robo Mathsters, RoboBears, Coding Warriors, Calibots, Code Red - were excited and having fun, whooping and clapping when their robot succeeded in doing the designated task. Colorful posters, with artwork and logos for each team, lined the walls, adding a splash.

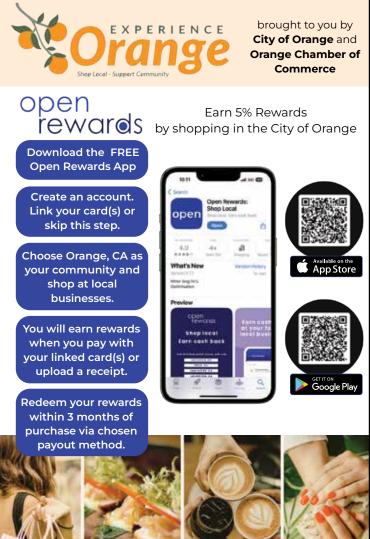
Greg Miller, OUSD C-STEM resource teacher, coordinated the event and kept the competition running smoothly.

OUSD Trustees Andrea Yamasaki, Kris Erickson, Ana Page and Stephen Glass stopped by to observe the action and awards ceremony.



Student teams were full of anticipation as they waited to see if their robots were going to meet the designated challenge – within 10 minutes! -- as planned.







Claiming first place in Division D, grades 5 and 6, were the Memorable Meteors from McPherson Magnet School, taught by Lauri Truong, far left. The students, left to right, are Asher Carpenter, Scarlett Mayfield, Camila Tadeo, Olivia Halter, and Graysen Gowen, with, rear, Greg Miller, OUSD C-STEM resource teacher and host, and Randy Kolset, coordinator of educational technology.







The Stealers, from Jordan Academy of Language and Computer Science, took first in Division E for grades 3 and 4. Rear left is teacher Richard Ramirez-Tamayo, C-STEM resource teacher Greg Miller and coordinator of educational technology Randy Kolset; front are students Aiden Graham, Bryan Cruz, Logan Espitia, Jesse Sanchez and Samantha Hernandez.

Orange parking permit program codified

A City of Orange program that provides curbside parking permits to residents in car-congested neighborhoods is being clarified in the Municipal Code.

The goals, procedures and criteria of the Neighborhood Permit Parking Program will not change. However, the new ordinance will allow multi-family residences to apply for permits, with the number granted based on bedroom count.

Over 25 neighborhoods have permit parking, with more than six added in the last year. The city recognizes that when one residential block becomes permit parking only, cars without permits spill over onto adjacent streets.

To ease that burden, the city identified five areas where multifamily complexes, commercial, institutional or recreational outlets contribute to parking congestion on single-family streets. Those areas, identified in 2022, join neighborhoods around Chapman University (which inspired the program in 1987), are eligible for streamlined permitting.

Those six areas are memorialized in the new city ordinance. They include streets bounded by Sycamore Avenue, Main Street, the 22 and 57 freeways in District 2; Tustin Street, the 22, Fairway and Cambridge Streets in District 1; Walnut, the 55 and Wayfield in District 5; Cambridge, the flood control channel, Grand and Katella in District 3; and Meats, Cambridge, Del Mar and Lincoln Street in District 3.

Any neighborhood that believes it qualifies for permit parking only is welcome to apply.



Santiago Oaks Nature Center

Santiago Oaks gets facelift

Santiago Oaks Regional Park is one of the smaller, lesser-known (read, less busy) parks in the OC Parks system.

It has been upgraded with expanded walking trails, a historic orange grove, two dams to visit, a child-safe playset with an in-

credible view, an updated Nature Center - even a wedding reception facility. There are 18 miles of scenic trails for those on foot, on bikes or on hooves, open 7 a.m. to sunset.

The park is located just off Santiago and Windes in Orange.





Chris Epting

The Villa Park Library will present a program with local author Chris Epting on Saturday, July 20 at 2 p.m.

Veteran music journalist, award-winning author of over 40 travel/history books, bon vivant and master storyteller, Epting will discuss his latest release, "Lost Landmarks of Orange County," a slice of local history.

Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm are well known, but there was also the Lion Country Safari, Movieland Wax Museum, the Buffalo Ranch, the California Alligator Farm, and such famed concert venues as the Golden Bear, Cuckoo's Nest and Irvine Meadows - all places that made Orange County a mecca for bands, and a popular destination for all ages. Today, all of these locations are gone, but Epting's book keeps the memories alive.

Books will be available for purchase and signing after the event. The Villa Park Library is located at 17865 Santiago Blvd., in the Villa Park Towne Center; phone (714) 998-0861.

Orange Elks celebrate Flag Day

The Orange Elks recognize Flag Day every year with a program that encourages community participation.

This year, the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Morgan Hendrickson, Hannah Hendrickson and Ashley Smith. The program included a history of U.S. flags, Johnny Cash's "That Ragged Old Flag" video, and an audience sing-along.

The Orange Elks also execute a Flags over Orange project, where in flags are installed at residences for military veterans, police and fire retirees or senior citizens. Volunteers will mount a flagpole and solar light to keep the flag properly displayed at night.



From left, Morgan Hendrickson, Hannah Hendrickson, Ashley Smith, Don Westerfield and Colin Smith at the Elks Flag Day program.

OPA barbecue coming this fall

Preliminary plans are underway for Orange Park Acres' annual Fall BBQ and dance. It will be held at 5 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 21. Details will be forthcoming at orangeparkacres.org. Save the date!





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By Stephanie Tilhof

Former Major League Baseball player and Orange resident Danny Espinosa Jr. decided to restart a local nonprofit youth baseball organization because he thought it would be a good place for his two sons, Ty and Levi, to play.

OC Crush Baseball is crush'n It

Fast forward 18 months, and OC Crush Baseball has grown from a single team to seven teams with four coaches and 77 players.

"The reason I did this, is because of the impact baseball had on my life," said Espinosa. "It is an opportunity for me to be on the field." Espinosa was drafted in 2008 by the Washington Nationals, where he was named National League Player of the Week in 2016 after hitting five home runs, and 17 RBIs in seven days. He also had short stints with the Los Angeles Dodgers, Seattle Mariners, Tampa Bay Rays and the Angels. Before retiring, Espinosa represented the Mexican National team in the 2020 Olympics. "To be in the big leagues is tough," said Espinosa. "I want the kids to learn a strong work ethic. You can't expect things. We teach

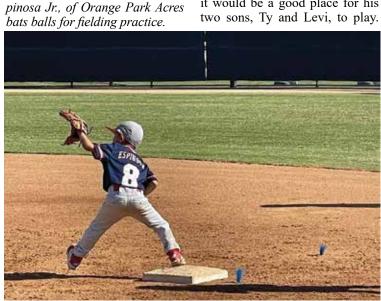
them responsibility."

Parents with kids playing in the organization agree. They say the experience has been very different than Little League. "It's another level. The kids push themselves. It's more of a community. They're making friendships," said parent Alicia Peterson. "I think it's valuable. They're developing quicker," added parent Ly Chagollan.

Those skills are already paying off as OC Crush has been racking up its share of wins. Ryan Yowell, who re-started the organization with Espinosa, says in June, their team of 7-year-olds won the 2024 USSSA Frozen Fury OC. The 8-year-olds notched victory in the 11th Annual NCS San Diego Memorial Day Classic. Their team of 9-year-olds won the USSSA World Series WarmUp Tournament and the USSSA 2024 May Showdown, while the 11-year-olds took the Irvine Memorial Day Tournament.

Yowell expects they will add five more teams in the fall, for a total of 132 kids. He was surprised they had such a phenomenal response. While it's a lot of work, he's inspired by the camaraderie. "When I see the 9-yearolds cheering on the 7-year-olds, and the 11-year-olds playing wiffle ball with the 10-year-olds," said Yowell, "I feel like we are building something special for the community."

In July, four of the teams will play in the National Championship Sports Series. The organization also offers a scholarship for a player in need at its an annual summer camp. For more information, see occrushbaseball.com.



Levi Espinosa prepares for the catch.

Former big-leaguer Danny Es-



Athletes burn up the handball courts in first official league play

The Annual Knox/Barrera Handball Challenge/District Finals has grown from a friendly competition to official league play, thanks to the efforts of Commissioner Johnny Johnson.

A retired coach, Johnson has continued to single-handedly coordinate the tournament, named in honor of past supporters Fred Barrera and Jeri Knox.

He has also worked hard to form a handball league in the Orange Unified School District, with teams, funding and coaches: Andrew Luna at El Modena, Maritza Hernandez at Richland, Luis Castaneda-Martinez at Orland, El Modena and Villa Park were bused to Orange High for an opening breakfast with guest speaker Gilbert Granado, director of the Santa Ana Handball Club, who spoke on a "Winning Mentality" on the court and in life.

Coach Johnson spoke about the district's focus on grades and attendance. The entire Richland handball team was congratulated for its commitment to handball and members' increased attendance. Every player received a tournament T-shirt.

Lunch, courtesy of Knox Insurance, was followed by intense singles competition play in the single elimination tournament. At one juncture, cousins - one from Orange High and one from Villa Park - were pitted against one another. In the end, Michael Herrera of Orange High defeated Alex Campos from Villa Park, 8 to 6, to become the 2024 singles winner. In the doubles competition, Orange High's Peter Ramirez and Andrew Hernandez defeated VPHS's Jesus Velasquez and Jerry Herrera, 8 to 7. Winners were awarded hoodies and gift cards from McDonalds.



ange High, and Andrew Reyes at Villa Park.

Handball requires little equipment – a ball and a wall – and can readily be played without expensive equipment, uniforms or fields.

Referees are not needed, as players are respectful of one another and where the ball lies.

Johnson began teaching the sport at OUSD middle schools, encouraging teamwork and respect, and has watched many of the players compete in the annual tournament.

This year, teams from Rich-

With high school athletics off the field for the summer, Sports Editor Cliff Robbins took this month off. He will return in August.



The teams and their coach gather for the annual group shot. Coach J (Johnny Johnson) is in white, in the rear.



Jerry Herrera and Jesus Velasquez, in blue, came in second to doubles winners Peter Ramierz and Andrew Hernadez, at the wall, from Orange High.



Singles winner Michael Herrera