

FOOTHILLS SENTRY

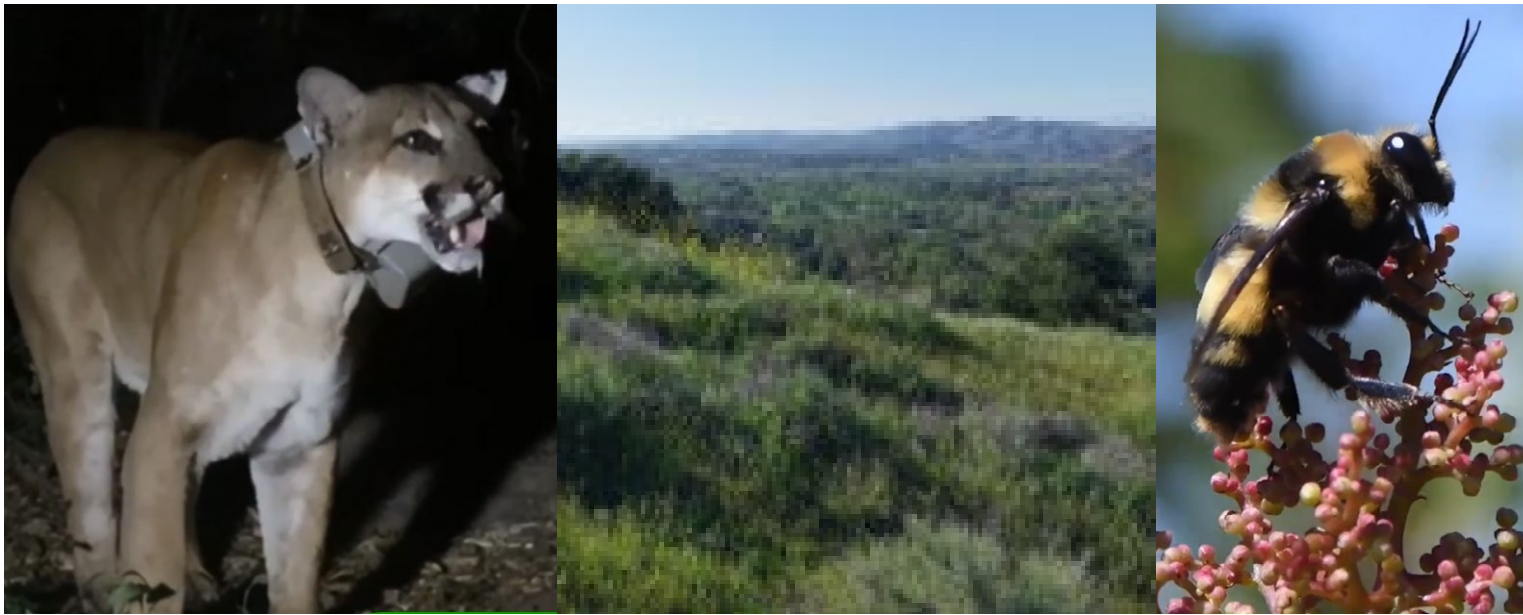
The Best News In Town Since 1969

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A Monthly Community Newspaper

MAY 2026

Irvine Company to do Supplemental EIR for Orange Heights project



The Irvine Company will do a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for its proposed Orange Heights housing development. The acreage, connecting Peters Canyon and Irvine Park, is home to such endangered species as Crotch's bumble bee and mountain lions.

County overrides long-standing covenant

Emboldened by a new round of California state legislation, Orange County has nullified a deed covenant between the Tustin Hills Racquet Club and its neighbors that has been in place for 50 years.

The covenant, recorded in 1974, assured neighbors that if the Racquet Club was ever replaced with housing, those units would match the existing neighborhood; that is, single family homes on 20,000-sq.-ft. lots.

A Newport Beach-based developer bought the property several years ago with the intent to build 37 townhomes on the six-acre parcel. North Tustin residents have been fighting the project ever since.

The state legislation, AB1050, passed in October 2025 and effective Jan. 1, enables jurisdictions to declare deed covenants that restrict residential use "unenforceable."

The Assembly Bill was conceived to turn "blighted or underperforming, economically

See "County overrides" continued on page 3

By Andie Mills

The Irvine Company has agreed to draft a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for its planned Orange Heights development in East Orange. It will also reduce the number of proposed housing units.

A public scoping meeting for the refined Orange Heights project has been slated for 4:30-7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 5 at the Orange Public Library Community Room.

The project is located

on 421 acres on a triangular site, with Irvine Regional Park to the north, Jamboree to the west, State 241/261 east, bisected by Santiago Canyon Road.

The project was originally approved in 1989, which included up to 12,350 homes on approximately 7,100 acres. The 2005 approval of Santiago Hills II/East Orange reduced the development to 1,746 homes on 496 acres called Santiago Hills II and up to 2,300 homes in a 6,335-acre area called East Orange.

The Irvine Company dedicated the East Orange site to the county as open space and, in 2016, the city reduced the Santiago Hills II project to 1,180 residences.

Now, the refined Orange Heights project would modify the formerly approved Santiago Hills II project by 122 residential units, from 1,180 to 1,058; approximately 79 acres of open space; include an improved trail system,

See "Orange Heights" continued on page 2

State will audit OC Board of Education

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee has approved State Senator Tom Umberg's request to conduct an audit of the Orange County Board of Education and its public administration practices.

"The people of Orange County deserve transparency, accountability and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars," said Senator Umberg. "For years, serious concerns have been raised about the Board's governance, litigation practices and policy decisions. This audit is an important step toward ensuring that public resources are being used appropriately and that the focus remains on serving students and families."

The audit comes in response to a series of actions by the Orange County Board of Education that have raised concerns about governance, legal risk, and the use of taxpayer resources. These include opposition to implementation of the California Healthy Youth Act, efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic to reopen schools without public health safeguards and related litigation, controversial charter school approvals, and multiple lawsuits involving state policy and internal governance.

The audit will examine a pattern of governance disputes, litigation activity, and policy decisions over recent years that raise significant

questions about transparency, fiscal stewardship, civil rights compliance, and adherence to statutory responsibilities.

"I have been following the OC BoE for several years, including attendance at many of their meetings," said Andy Thorburn, president of the Contemporary Policy Institute. "It often seems that they are following a private agenda, rather than the public interest, and a full, non-partisan audit is the only way the voters of OC will have insight into their decision-making process and financial management."

While the State Auditor has not yet issued a timeline for completion, the audit is expected to take at least six months.

NEWS INSIDE

IT'S OFFICIAL

Orange leadership (elected and appointed) give Old Towne residents the latest on topics of community interest. See OPA, page 4

THE REST OF THE STORY

Residents offer background information and insights into the local news of the day. See Guest Commentaries, letters, pages 5,6

BACK TO THE GARDEN

Orange Woman's Club names winners in annual flower show. See Woman's, page 8

THIS PETER CAN'T PAY PAUL

Budget review by city council shows more "if onlys" than income. See Orange, page 12

FOOD FOR FURRY FRIENDS

Pet pantry partnership produces purring and panting from four-legged family members. See Drive-through, page 13

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modified lot and street layouts, updated guidelines related to architectural design, home types and landscape design.

Major infrastructure improvements include the construction of a Zone 6 water reservoir, a water pump station south of Santiago by IRWD, undergrounding of electrical lines, relocation of a water pipeline, water quality treatment basins and the Peters Canyon Outfall structure.

Significant environmental effects to be evaluated in the SEIR include: aesthetics, air quality, biological and cultural resources, geology and soils, green-

house gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials pertinent to wildland fires, hydrology and water quality, noise, land use and planning, public services, recreation, transportation, tribal cultural resources, utilities/service systems and wildfire.

Orange Art to present oil painter

The Orange Art Association will present Steve Sandaborg at the Monday, May 11 meeting. He will demonstrate the use of different boats in oil beginning at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at Community of Christ Church, 395 South Tustin.

Serrano Water District names new general manager



Andrew Wiesner

Serrano Water District has named Andrew Wiesner as the new general manager, to succeed Jerry Vilander upon his retirement on July 6. Wiesner was on-boarded March 30, working alongside Vilander to assure a smooth transition.

Wiesner is an experienced engineering professional with a background in water systems design and management. He holds a B.S. in chemical engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a master's in environmental engineering from the University of Texas at Austin.

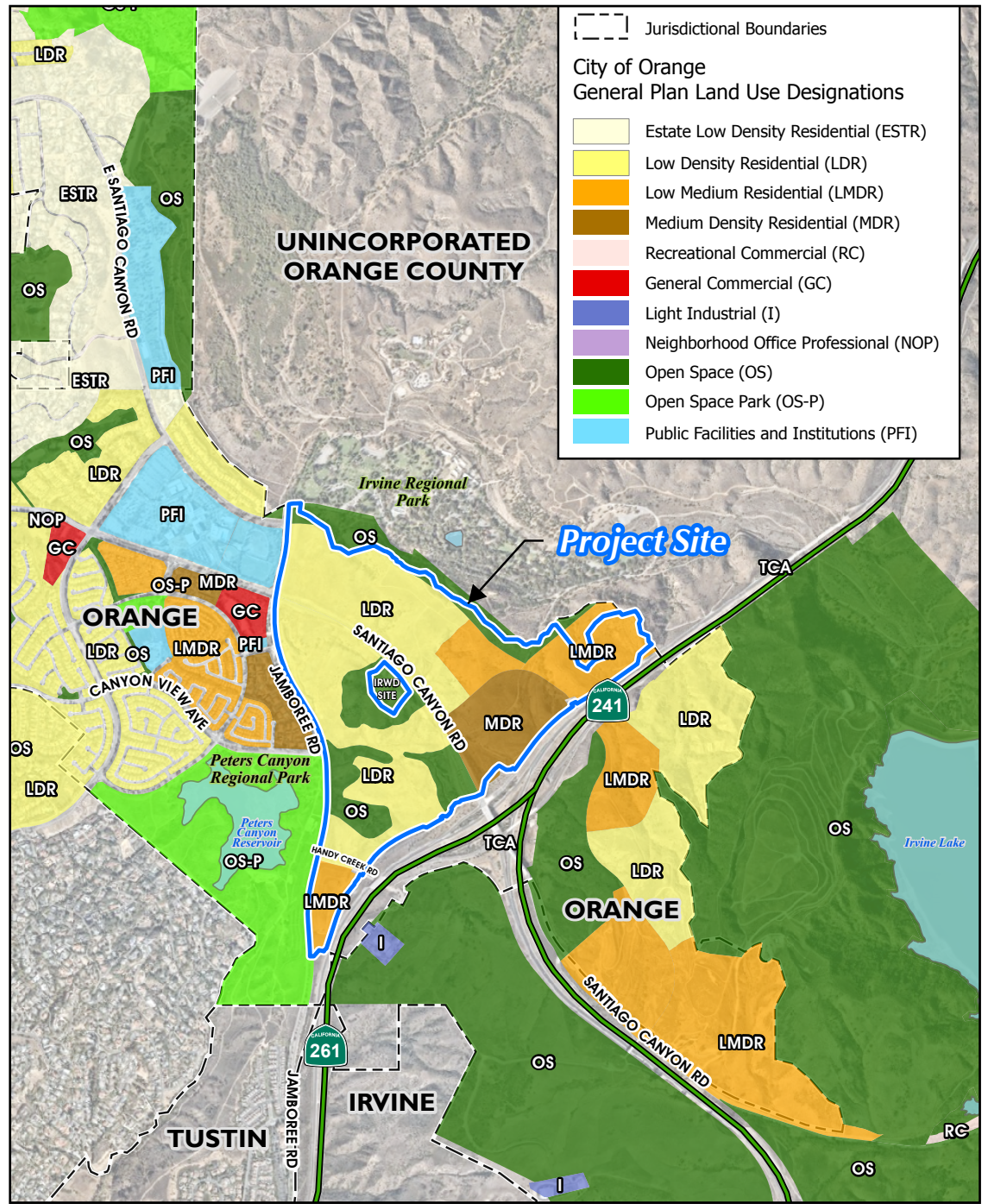
Andrew began his career as an engineering consultant; he spent 14 years providing technical expertise and project leadership for water and wastewater treatment plant planning and design projects. During this time, Andrew developed a strong foundation in planning, design, regulatory compliance, and construction of pub-

lic works projects while working with many public agencies and stakeholders.

He later served as district engineer for Mesa Water District for five years, managing engineering operations and overseeing capital improvement projects and system planning. In this role, Andrew played a key part in executing a \$70 million dollar capital improvement program that constructed two new groundwater wells, rehabilitated two reservoir pump stations, constructed two reservoir management systems, replaced 80 main-line valves, and installed over two miles of pipeline. Following the completion of that capital improvement program, Andrew oversaw the development of a water system master plan that developed the capital improvement program for the next ten years at Mesa Water.

In his personal life, Andrew enjoys spending time with his family, coaching his daughter's soccer team and running.

With nearly two decades of experience, Andrew brings a practical and collaborative approach to water system management, focused on delivering sustainable solutions and supporting community needs. He is excited to bring this experience to his new role as the General Manager at Serrano Water District to help continue the success SWD.



Orange Heights project

Orange Elks support homeless, youth and reading



From left, Astrid Arzola, Lauren Bethencourt, Garrett Hamblin, Joanna Fermin, Kenna Pettaway, Julie Sutton and Desiree Barrera with a check.



From left, KJ Martinez, Julianne Taylor, Seth Lawrence, Wyatt Wozneak, Nicholas Masdea and Tyler Collins at the Antler Book Sale.

The Orange Elks continue to support its Community Partners. The HUB OC is a non-profit resource center serving the unhoused and individuals experiencing hardship.

The Lodge is currently collecting men's and women's body spray

to donate to The Hub through May 16. Please drop off donations at the Orange Elks Lodge, 211 E. Chapman.

The Lodge also presented the Youth Centers of Orange with a \$1,000 donation to support its programs.

The Orange Elks youth

Antler Program, hit the ground running, holding a book sale to benefit the Reading Promise. The event raised \$535.

The books that were not sold were given to the Boys & Girls Club and the Vietnam Veterans to replenish their reading libraries.

"County overrides" continued from page 1

stagnant commercial sites into productive, revenue-generating housing projects." In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, many commercial corridors and shopping centers were failing. Owners looked to mixed-use or residential solutions, but were sometimes blocked by recorded restrictions against housing development. The drive to override "outdated" deed restrictions was originally intended to accommodate affordable housing only.

The law changed, however, to include "any property owned or controlled by an entity or individual that has submitted an application to redevelop a commercial property into any residential use permitted by state housing laws or lo-

cal land use and zoning regulations, regardless of affordability."

The Racquet Club property owner filed for a restrictive covenant modification on Jan. 23. It was granted by OC County Counsel Jan. 29, and recorded Feb. 3. Neighbors of the recreational facility were notified of the "modification" by mail a week later. Most North Tustin residents did not learn about the county's nullification of the covenant until it was presented as a done deal at the March 2 Foothill Communities Association meeting.

With no opportunity to challenge the county's rejection of the covenant up front, residents have subsequently filed a lawsuit. The covenant modification process has not yet been tested in court and its legality is undetermined.



The original intent of AB1050 was to override covenants that kept blighted or underused properties for affordable housing. That intent did not survive legislative debate and the resulting bill does not reference underused malls or commercial corridors and allows covenants to be modified for all market rate housing. The owner of the Tustin Racquet Club applied for a covenant modification that would include 37 units of high density housing on the six-acre parcel. The county approved it. Neighbors who have opposed the project for years do not accept the county's decision that a thriving recreational property, already zoned for single-family homes, is in keeping with the spirit of AB1050. They do not believe the statute applies.



The California Fire Museum and Safety Learning Center, located in the former fire department headquarters in Orange, celebrated its grand opening on March 21. Pat Buttress, field representative for Third District Supervisor Don Wagner, presented Museum President Hiddo Horlings with a certificate of recognition.

Tustin Street Fair and Chili Cook-off coming

By Guy Ball



Photos Courtesy Tustin Parks and Rec

The 42nd annual Tustin Street Fair and Chili Cook-off returns to the streets of Old Town on Sunday, June 7th, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. This annual community party holds the honor of being the largest one-day chili cook-off in the country, according to the International Chili Society.

The event comes alive with a variety of exhibitors, including crafters, community organizations, food and chili booths and a craft beer and wine garden. Additional activities include a car show and Jalapeño and watermelon-eating contests. Live music and community acts are featured on three event stages. For the kids, there is a large Kids Fun Zone with games, bounce houses and entertainment located at adjacent Peppertree Park.

Streets closed for pedestrian-only traffic include El Camino Real and C Street from 1st to 6th streets, as well as Main Street from El Camino Real to C Street.

Proceeds from the event are donated to local non-profit organizations and service groups.



Revelers command streets of Tustin



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OTPA hosts annual State of Old Towne Forum

By Stepheny Gehrig

The Old Towne Preservation Association held its 11th annual State of Old Towne Forum, April 16, hitting on crime rates in the city, plans for a sales tax and paid parking in the Plaza area.

The panel included Mayor Dan Slater, District 1 Councilmember Ariana Barrios, City Manager Jarad Hildenbrand, Treasurer Garrett Smith, Chief of Police Adam Jevic and Chapman University Representative and Vice President of Community Relations Alisa Driscoll.

Homelessness down

Slater began by addressing three trending issues: crime reduction, the unhoused population and Santiago Creek. Since his election in 2024, the Mayor reported that the crime rate has dropped 28%, and credited the Orange Police Department.

While the statistics are not currently available, Slater stated that the data on the unhoused population should reflect a decline as well; that data will be available in June. Chief of Police Jevic affirmed that 200 people were shel-

tered and 140 encampments were cleaned up during the last year.

To mitigate homelessness, four designated individuals work with a county mental health clinician to go on calls with officers.

A peak at creek

Slater commended the Santiago Creek Commission, which offers advice and recommendations to the council on preservation of the creek and bridges the gap between the city officials and community members and volunteers.

"The council put in place the Santiago Creek Commission. They've been hard at work," Slater said. "The creek is a huge resource for the City of Orange, and it's overdue that we recognize it for what it is and enjoy it as a recreational resource."

When speaking of his plans, if reelected as mayor, Slater spotlighted passing a sales tax initiative as a key goal. The one-cent sales tax initiative would be implemented to mitigate the financial struggle and predicted bankruptcy of the city and is expected to return to the

ballots this year.

One-cent sense

"Over the next two years, my top priority is going to be to make sure that when I leave office, this city is fiscally sound," Slater said. "We do need that one cent."

With the goal of passing a sales tax initiative, Jarad Hildenbrand echoed the same sentiments.

The city still faces a deficit and is removing funding from refurbishment and improvement projects, as operating revenues tally \$153 million and expenditures reach \$143 million.

"A couple of years ago, we were struggling," Hildenbrand said. "The Grant Thornton Report advised we are facing bankruptcy in a number of years. I don't think we're facing bankruptcy that quickly. But our revenues are not keeping up with the expenditures that, I believe, we need to be a world class city."

According to Hildenbrand, the one-cent sales tax will generate approximately \$38 million. However, there is a lingering fear that the revenue will not form enough of a cushion after other city expenses.

Parking fees

Additionally, Slater commented on paid parking in Old Towne. In 2025, hourly paid parking was introduced and ranges from \$1.25 to \$2 during the week, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. It was at the request of the merchants, according to Slater. He commended the program, as it deters

employees from utilizing the parking spaces in front of establishments, allowing spaces for customers. He said that there will be revenue of \$1.5 million a year, solely from paid parking.

After the November election, Councilmember Barrios will be stepping down from the city council.



American Legion Post 132 in Orange will be host to 100 active-duty Navy, Coast Guard and Marine Corps personnel for breakfast on Thursday, May 21, as part of LA Fleet Week 2026. The sailors will arrive at the Post at 9:30 a.m. and spend about two hours there before heading over to Disneyland. Last year, the Post welcomed 100 visiting service members for lunch during Fleet Week; members of the Post and the sailors connected, and by all accounts it was a highlight of their day ashore.

Tustin Historic Preservation Week

By Guy Ball

Tustin celebrates its history in May with a full week of historical and

preservation activities, from a cemetery tour to a guided house tour, and others in between. All of the events are

free. For more information or event updates, visit tustinca.org/historicpreservationweek.

Saturday, May 16: Tustin OC Library, 345 Main St., 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Visit the Tustin Library and see vintage car displays, historic and preservation artifacts and more.

Sunday, May 17: Third Street Stroll, Tustin Area Senior Center, 200 S. C St., 10 a.m. Enjoy a guided residential walking tour through Tustin's history, featuring Old Town homes, with an emphasis on agricultural history.

Monday, May 18: Citrus Ranch Park, 2910 Portola Pkwy., 6 p.m. Join others for a short educational walk in Citrus Park to learn how Tustin's agricultural history shaped the growth of the City today.

Tuesday, May 19: City Hall, 300 Centennial Way, 6 p.m. A special city council presentation about Historic Preservation Week, recognizing its local historic partners.

Wednesday, May 20: Armstrong Garden Center, 505 El Camino Real, 6 p.m. Learn practical ways to care for citrus – connecting Tustin's agricultural past to the modern day.

Thursday, May 21: Sunset Market and Museum Open House, Old Town Tustin, 5 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. While enjoying the Sunset Market, drop by the Historic Preservation Team's booth and visit the Tustin Area Museum.

Friday, May 22: Cemetery Tour, Santa Ana Cemetery, 1919 E. Santa Clara Ave., Santa Ana, 3:30 p.m. Back by popular demand. Join historians on a tour of the final resting places of iconic Tustin residents.

Saturday, May 23: Night at the Museum, Tustin Area Museum, 395 El Camino Real, 7 p.m. Enjoy an informational evening at the Tustin Museum, featuring members of the City's Economic Development Department speaking about the economic benefits of historic preservation.

OC in the Colonial and Revolutionary War Era revealed



Gaspar de Portola, Spanish Military Officer and first governor of the California's (1767-1770).

Local historian and Orange County Historical Society president Chris Jepsen will discuss "OC in the Colonial & Revolutionary War Era" at the next meeting of the Orange County Historical Society on Thursday, May 14.

As we celebrate our nation's 250th anniversary, we often use the term "Colonial America"

to refer to the 13 colonies on the East Coast. But California was also an American colony (albeit Spanish) at the time, and plenty of history was being made here, too.

Chris Jepsen is an independent historian, frequent lecturer, and longtime president of the Orange County Historical Society. He has written for historical journals, his own OC History Roundup blog, and various government publications. For six years, Chris was "Orange Coast Magazine's" OC Answer Man.

The meeting will start at 7:30 p.m., at Trinity Episcopal Church, 2400 N. Canal St. Attendance is free for OCHS members or a \$5 donation for non-members.

For more information about the Orange County Historical Society, local history, and future meetings, visit OrangeCountyHistory.org.

Guest Commentaries

From warning to crisis: One college trustee's fight for accountability

By Dr. Barry Resnick

The Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) has faced scrutiny before, particularly over its relationship with the Alliance of Schools for Cooperative Insurance Programs (ASCIP), which held millions of dollars off the district's books. But what unfolded at the April 13 board meeting makes it clear the RSCCD is an institution in crisis.

For almost two years, concerns have grown that Chancellor Marvin Martinez misled both the trustees and the public. Trustee Phil Yarbrough raised a warning alarm at that time, after discovering that \$8 mil-

lion was being held in an account controlled by ASCIP. Those funds were never disclosed to the board, employee unions, oversight committees or auditors. They were known only to Martinez and a small circle of administrators.

That revelation should have prompted immediate action. Instead, under then-board President Daisy Tong, it prompted none.

Yarbrough called for a forensic audit, which confirmed the funds had been withheld by ASCIP from the district for years.

Rather than addressing the findings, Tong suggested auditing the audit — a move that de-

flected, rather than addressed, the underlying problem.

Now, with Yarbrough serving as board president, he is attempting to force action, but the board appears unable to follow through.

Instead of focusing on the main question of whether Martinez misled the board and should remain in charge, the April 13 meeting got bogged down in procedural details. Agenda items centered on hiring investigators and outside lawyers, mostly because Martinez accused Yarbrough of discrimination, harassment and retaliation after Yarbrough called for accountability.

At the same time, Jeannie Kim, president of Santiago Canyon College, filed her own complaints against Martinez and senior administrator Enrique Perez.

The RSCCD board is no longer dealing with isolated concerns. It now faces converging warnings from a trustee who uncovered hidden funds and from a college president raising internal complaints.

Most tellingly, the agenda included what should have been the central item, the potential discipline or dismissal of Martinez. That was the moment for a decision, but it never came.

Instead, the board tabled action, choosing

delay over accountability.

The result is a governing body that appears incapable of decisive leadership at precisely the moment it is needed most.

Public institutions depend on transparency, trust and leadership. RSCCD is now falling short on all three. It's not because the problems are unclear, but because the will to act has been absent.

Dr. Barry Resnick retired in 2022 after 42 years as a professor of counseling with the Rancho Santiago CCD. He has resided with his family in Orange for 39 years.

New Amendment sparks lawsuits to protect local property and zoning rights

By David Holt

The proposed redevelopment of the Tustin Hills Racquet Club into 37 condominiums has been one of the hottest contested land-use battles in the county over the last five years, and it just got hotter.

The Club is a popular hub for tennis, pickleball, swimming, Pilates and community gatherings, which has benefited Orange County residents for over 50 years.

Several years ago, Ranch Hill Partners purchased the Club with the intent to demolish it and replace it with 37 private homes, 34 of which are multi-unit structures, on lots as small as 3,500 square feet.

North Tustin residents and the Foothill Communities Association (FCA) have strongly opposed the project, due to serious concerns relating to fire safety, community impact and its inconsistency with local zoning laws, which is subject to a pending lawsuit in the Superior Court for the County of Orange. The legal challenge also addresses a breach of a 50-year-old recorded covenant that protects the neighborhood from future high-density development.

Club expansion and the covenant

Established in 1958, the Club sits on about six acres adjacent to Tract

3883, comprised of 118 single-family homes. The Club can only be accessed through the tract.

In 1974, the Club sought to expand its operations and requested county approval to rezone its property from E4 to A-1 Agriculture, which would not only allow the expansion, but would also provide the Club with favorable tax benefits. Due to public concerns for future use of the Club property, the county refused to rezone without tract approval.

In order to alleviate the public concerns regarding future uses and gain tract support for the rezoning, the Club proposed and had its legal counsel draft the covenant, which provides in pertinent part:

"The use of the premises ... shall be either that of a commercial or non-commercial private membership tennis club, and in the event that the use shall be other than that of a commercial or non-commercial private membership tennis club, such other use shall conform to the uses permitted in Tract 3883."

The tract agreed and the covenant was executed and recorded.

Civil Code Section 714.6 and legislative history

The California Legislature recently passed legislation amending Civil Code Section

714.6, effective Jan. 1. The Amendment gives a developer the opportunity to remove or invalidate recorded restrictive covenants that block housing developments, in order to facilitate residential redevelopment of commercial properties. Simply put, if commercial property has an old recorded restriction preventing or limiting housing, a qualifying housing developer can go through a formal process to essentially eliminate and override that restriction.

A variety of covenants and restrictions remain untouched by the amendment. It applies only to restrictive covenants (as defined) and not to any other covenants, including covenants that relate to a settlement.

The legislative history specifically notes that the Amendment is designed to facilitate the adaptive reuse of vacant (distressed) shopping centers and commercial corridors, and not ongoing operating private membership clubs.

County approval of developer application to modify covenant

On Jan. 23, the developer, Ranch Hill Partners, used the Amendment to submit an application with the county to modify the covenant. Within one week and without any notice to the Tract,



Legislation should not apply to the Tustin Hills Racquet Club

the county approved the application and struck the language in the covenant requiring residential development of the Club to conform to the uses of the tract.

The modification obviously will have a negative impact on the pending covenant lawsuit opposing the Club redevelopment. Members of the tract that received notice of the modification had a 35-day deadline to file a lawsuit. As of now, two lawsuits have been filed by tract members to contest the covenant modification. We believe we have a strong case. The legislation does not apply to settlements; the thriving recreational facility is not an underused property better served with high density housing; and, we have recorded documents defining the county's intent towards the property.

While California faces a housing shortage, it is essential to understand

that not all housing projects should automatically be approved, especially in this case, where the law is being incorrectly applied to eviscerate the covenant.

How you can help

We urgently need your support to continue this fight. Financial contributions are crucial to ensuring that we have the resources to take this battle to its rightful conclusion.

Please donate today to help protect our community and safeguard local control.

To donate:

1. GoFundMe Tustin Racquet Club
2. Send a check made out to FCA, P.O. Box 261, Tustin CA 92781, Note "Racquet Club Litigation" on memo line.

David Holt is an attorney practicing in Tustin and a neighbor of the Racquet Club.

Guest Commentaries

State will audit OC Board of Education's \$8.1 million legal fees; did they benefit students?

By Lynne Riddle

Many of us recently learned there will be an official state audit into the policies, practices and expenditures of the Orange County Board of Education (OCBE). Broadly, the report may help us determine whether – and to what extent – our taxpayer dollars spent by the Board benefits the classroom learning experiences of OC kids.

Our state's Joint Legislative Audit Committee has asked the state to look into, and report on, six particular areas. My comments focus on the one regarding OCBE legal fee expenditures, the Board's tax dollar spending; its transparency, fiscal practices and legal compliance. Those questions come to the fore based on my 60-plus years in university teaching, law practice and judicial tenure, along with my sitting through nearly every OCBE meeting from 2018 through 2024.

As the published OCBE/Orange County Department of Education annual budgets show, between 2013 to 2018 the amount of combined legal expense incurred by both OCBE and the OC Superintendent was \$51,626. That averaged

to just over \$10,000 per year. But between 2018 and 2024, total legal costs came to \$8.1 million. That's an average legal expenditure of \$1,351,000 per year – a stunning 2,500% increase.

A reasonable question is, "how did that \$8 million spending improve our children's school experience?"

Our OCBE... (I use "our OCBE" to underscore the fact that we elect each OCBE member, and they become trustees, bound by oath, to use our tax dollars to maximize our children's learning experience.) In any case, our OCBE – as plaintiff – initiated six lawsuits in the OC Superior Court between 2018 and 2024; two against the County Superintendent of Schools (with one including our State Superintendent of Public Instruction); a suit against Governor Gavin Newsom and the State Department of Public Health, two against the Orange County Committee on School District Organization (a state-funded education agency); and then in 2024 against the Orange County Department of Education. One of the six (filed in 2019) is still open. In none of the other five did the OCBE receive a favor-

able judgment. In its first suit against the Superintendent, after some 20 days of trial, the parties "settled." That said, the estimated legal expense of over \$3,000,000 came from public funds.

We OC residents should be especially concerned when the OCBE sues the County Superintendent, the County Committee and the OC Department of Education (OCDE), because all the attorneys fees and costs, for both sides, come from the same pocket. Every dime spent was our money.

Not only did the OCBE file its first lawsuit in 2018, it hired its own "special" general counsel. Its "special" attorney was not hired to provide advice to our OC Ed Department or any OC local school district. Throughout his engagement, the Board's "special" attorney resided in the Bay Area. As he traveled, hotel-stayed, ate, attended board meetings, we taxpayers paid for his time and costs, from September 2018 through about July 2024.

The public was never informed of how much he was paid between

2018-2021. Beginning in 2022, the OCBE began to post meeting agendas with copies of his invoices. His invoices in 2022 totaled over \$330,000; in 2023, nearly \$590,000, and in his six months in 2024, nearly \$395,000. (His firm was not retained after June 2024.) Rounded, that's \$1,315,000 in 2-1/2 years (for advice, not litigation).

How did spending some \$1.6 on a "special" commuting attorney benefit our kids education?

After many hours reviewing the OCBE's legal fees and costs, I was concerned not only by the large numbers, but stunned by some of the out-of-pocket costs OCBE reimbursed. After reviewing those invoices, I had many questions. Here are a few.

I'd ask about the time he apparently had forgotten or lost his cellphone charger. OCBE paid for a new one. How about a stay at a D.C. hotel for \$827 per night? How many of us have stayed, at taxpayer expense or even at our own expense, in a D.C. hotel room at \$827 per night? Counsel's total

hotel bill, paid by the Board without question, was \$3,300. Not only that, the OCBE paid him some \$19,000 for a lobbying effort. And then there's the May 26, 2023 meal reimbursement for \$720 – a gathering attended by several board members. That money was paid back after the public learned about it.

Maybe the audit will tell us exactly who's guarding the OCBE vault?

I take the OCBE at its website-word, that "The Orange County Board of Education respects the public's right to accountability and will cooperate fully with the audit process," and assuring too that it will "participate fully in the audit process and provide complete and accurate information" and ending with "We are confident that a fair and objective review will reflect our commitment to students, families and the responsible stewardship of public resources."

Lynne Riddle is a retired educator, attorney and federal court judge. She is a long time OC resident and taxpayer.



Kris Erickson was given a Woman of Courage Award by the OC Democratic Party. Seen here with husband Curt Adams, Erickson has served on the Orange Unified School District Board of Trustees since 2019, and was board president in 2025. The award recognizes community activism, advocacy, organizing and public service.

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LETTERS to the EDITOR



New voices resonate

Dear Editor:

I am writing on behalf of The Hidden Ridge Voice, a newly formed community advocate group representing the residents of the Hidden Ridge and surrounding neighborhoods in Trabuco Canyon.

The OC Board of Supervisors will hear an appeal regarding the fate of Saddleback Meadows, a 181-home residential development, challenged for two decades, at its May 5 meeting. The project is located along El Toro Road in an unincorporated area of Trabuco Canyon.

Saddleback Meadows has been approved by the county, despite the significant safety risk it poses to current residential communities (based on limited wildfire emergency studies performed to date), ongoing zoning issues, and the negative impact this development could have on endangered mountain lions and wildlife.

The appeal hearing comes as Southern California communities navigate development decisions within areas designated as "Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones." Emergency access, evacuation planning, and infrastructure capacity have consistently been challenged as a part of land

use approvals. Trabuco Canyon and surrounding hillside communities have experienced major increases in wildfire potential in recent years—due to high wind velocity in canyon areas, changing fire behavior, and region wide discussions about development at the wildland urban interface.

In addition to wildfire related considerations, the project site is located near existing residential neighborhoods, regional open space areas and established wildlife corridors. As with many long challenged projects, the Saddleback Meadows development has progressed through multiple planning phases over the past two decades, with extremely limited public awareness or input.

This appeal hearing reflects an opportunity for further public review, and specifically the urgent need for an updated Environmental Impact Report.

Members of The Hidden Ridge Voice will be present at the hearing to provide public comment on the project's proximity to established canyon communities and a well-documented fire hazard; ongoing regional focus on wildfire preparedness and evacuation planning; the role of appeal hearings in the land use and entitlement process; broader Orange County conversations regarding growth, infrastructure, and lack of fire hazard and environmental review

The Hidden Ridge Voice was established to provide an organized forum for residents to engage constructively in discussions around land use, public process and community preparedness.

This group's focus is to ensure residents remain

well-informed and given the opportunity to participate in key meetings.

We welcome all county residents who share our land-use, fire safety and lack of transparency concerns to attend the board meeting or provide comments via email at hiddenridgevoice@gmail.com.

DeAnne Reed
The Hidden Ridge Voice
Trabuco Canyon

Keep it up

Dear Editor:

A public scoping meeting will be held to share information regarding the revised Orange Heights project on May 5 from 4:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the Orange Public Library.

It is critical that we have a significant number of attendees at this meeting to demonstrate the widespread concern about the impacts of this project.

The Irvine Company is preparing a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for minor revisions to its Orange Heights development project. The planned revisions call for 1,058 single-family residential units in a traffic congested Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. It threatens a biologically diverse wildlife corridor nestled in the Orange Hills between Irvine Regional Park and Peters Canyon at the rural gateway to the Santa Ana Mountains where mountain lions roam and a prehistoric Native American village site exists. Background conditions have changed substantially since the 2005 SEIR, which makes prior environmental studies severely out of date.

Public comments will be accepted at this meeting, but if you cannot make the May 5th meeting, the City of Orange is asking that you submit your written comments no later than May 25 at 5 p.m. Send written comments via email

or snail mail to: Hayden Beckman - Planning Manager, Community Development Department, City of Orange, 300 East Chapman Avenue, Orange CA. 92866; email: hbeckman@cityoforange.org.

Please include your name, address, and contact information in your correspondence.

This is the beginning of a process that will lead to the circulation of a draft SEIR, either late this year or early next year, when the public will have a final opportunity to submit comments to the Orange Planning Commission and city council about the project's environmental impacts and whether or not it should be approved.

Based on the findings

of the initial study, implementation of the refined Orange Heights project may result in significant environmental effects related to air quality, biology, cultural resources, greenhouse gas emissions, hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, wildland fires, and public services.

These topical issues will be evaluated further in the SEIR and will be compared to the impacts of the Approved Santiago Hills II Project from 2005. The Irvine Company has given the public another opportunity to address the issues related to this project. We need to speak up.

Joel Robinson
Orange

SWD proposes rate hike

Serrano Water District (SWD), which serves Villa Park and a small portion of Orange, will hold a Rate Study Workshop on Thursday, May 14 at 5 p.m. at the SWD Office at 18021 Lincoln St., Villa Park.

A special board meeting for the Prop 218 Rate Increase Public Hearing will be held on Wed., May 27, 5 p.m. at the SWD office.

The projected rate hike of approximately \$16.99 or 8.2% of the monthly bill, would begin July 1, 2026. The Pass-Through Adjustment is the result of new regulations, rising costs anticipated to increase more than 10%

per year for imported and pumped water, inflation and capital improvements. The capital improvement projects to increase supply reliability and replace end-of-useful-life infrastructure will include construction of a new groundwater well, replace the Smith Reservoir, replace aging water pipelines, and provide corrosion protection to extend the life of the Lockett Reservoir.

The rate hike is in accordance with Proposition 218, 1996, which limits California water providers from charging fees exceeding the actual cost of providing services.

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The Best News in Town

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CANYON BEAT *by Andrew Tonkovich*

May flies!

The Silverado Summer Concert Series kicks off Saturday, May 16 with What Just Happened, a multi-genre musical outfit, and local (legendary) favorite Jason Richards and His Silverado Band, an original bandmembers reunion with an opportunity for original fans to reunite, too.

Visit local earlier that day on the Canyon Artists Studio Tour, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. Eleven stops, beginning at Alice Phillips' Silverado studio and ending at ENC Tucker Wildlife Sanctuary. Find route maps at the Silverado Canyon Market or CanyonArtists.net. Supporter Marion Schuller reminds us of this "wonderful opportunity to both experience the beauty of the canyons and our tight-knit artists' community."

Primarily, and secondarily

Ballots for the June 2 so-called "jungle primary" mail May 4. OC Supervisor Don Wagner's run for Secretary of State is the best kept secret in his Fifth District. Assemblymember Kate Sanchez (R) runs for reelection against Silverado Canyon resident and SMRPD officer J.J. Galvez (D). Sanchez holds the second-worst voting record in the legislature. Digital Democracy/Cal Matters documents her missing an impressive 1,045 votes, meaning not

voting "no," but failing to cast a vote at all. Democratic Congressional challenger Lisa Ramirez met with Modjeska voters, and locals Ted and Nina Wright will host a "meet and greet" for Galvez at their home on Saturday, May 30. Signs posted by campaign volunteers remain up, perhaps because civic illiterates don't yet know who to hate on.

Posing, and juxtaposing

Voter fraud? Wagner knows better. He's been a fixture in OC and state politics for decades and elected many times. By voters! He started his career in the South Orange County Community College District, attacking the American Library Association (!) for not supporting Bush's war, so excels at telling Tea Party/MAGA voters what they want to hear, including that dogs and ineligible vote. Compare his campaign boilerplate to OC Vote's record of access, security and transparency.

Wagner: "Californians deserve an excellent election system that is secure, efficient, accurate and accessible to every eligible voter. I will make sure that every eligible voter can participate in our democracy while also protecting the security of elections by ensuring that only eligible voters cast ballots."

Meanwhile, OC Vote provides data, reports

and infographics with default rebuttals titled "Vote Easy. Vote Secure," an "Election Security Playbook," as well as a video, "Deeper Look at Election Integrity" in which Registrar of Voters Bob Page explains quality control procedures for mailing, receiving, processing and counting ballots. Oh, and you can track your mail-in ballot to confirm the above. Indeed, OC voters already get an excellent election system and illegally cast ballots are not counted, as per the Costa Mesa Republican criminal provocateur who registered her dog. The pup's vote was discarded. She pled guilty. Good dog. Naughty lady.

Calvert, or calvary?

The Easter edition of Rep. Young Kim's newsletter featured a Bible passage and the following: "May we reflect on the ultimate sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and let that sacrifice inspire in our hearts a renewed commitment to serve others." Recently redistricted, Kim's under attack from another MAGA candidate. Ken Calvert's ads call the super-Trumpy Kim a (gasp) "liberal" in ads from Americans for Security, a Wisconsin-based PAC. Tough for Calvert to reflect (proselytize) since communing with a prostitute (and not like Jesus did). Kim leads Calvert in campaign reserves of \$2 million with three Dems very, very far behind.



Reminder

Canyon hydrants, some bordering the tinder box that is the Cleveland National Forest, were recently festooned with Irvine Ranch Water District notices which residents had not, well, noticed before. Was the

advisory due to water thievery? No, just a helpful consumer reminder from IRWD:

"Fire hydrants are a critical resource used for firefighters to protect the properties we serve. We teamed up with Orange County Fire Authority to create and post these tags to educate the community that unauthorized use of fire hydrant water is a crime. We've had folks steal water in the past and want to remind people that this type of activity can disrupt firefighting capabilities and coordination."

All God's creatures

Nearly 200 attended a recent Library of the Canyons zoological extravaganza, a science-based introduction to critters gentle and fierce, including a great horned owl, desert tortoise, boa constrictor, snapping turtle, screaming hairy armadillo and American alligator.

Friends of the Library invites supporters to a Sunday, June 7 fundraiser at the Modjeska home of Geoff and Sarah Sarkissian. The third annual garden "spring fling" dinner features local acoustic jazz combo The Rats, culminating in a fierce bidding war for homemade desserts. Proceeds fund library programs. \$25. RSVP via text to (949) 235-8193.

At April's Inter-Canyon League meeting, Silverado Country Fair organizers invited applications for new vendors. Send to: silveradofair@gmail.com. Bic Edwards of Canyon Watch reminded Radio Net operators to charge their Baofeng devices. Francesca Duff announced a big donation. Need more good news? Attend the next regular meeting on Tuesday, May 5.

SMRPD goes GSOB

SMRPD recently committed to preventative spraying of oaks in both parks: adjacent the Community Center in Silverado and kitty-corner Modjeska's. Absent funds due to this year's bare-bones budget, but appreciating the defining character of oak trees in our canyons, they put out a call for donations, and our community came through with the \$660 needed. Thanks!

Young Woman of the Month named



Kailey Faircloth

Kailey Faircloth of Foothill High School was named a Young Woman of the Month for April by the Tustin Area Woman's Club.

Faircloth is an International Baccalaureate candidate. She has earned the Spanish Seal of Biliteracy and is an AP Scholar with Honors. She is on the varsity water polo and swim team and teaches swimming lessons. The high school senior has played the piano for over 13 years, and has achieved the Level 10 Certificate of Merit, the highest level possible. She authored and published her book "The Finding," founded the Cards for Kids with Cancer Club at Foothill High, and has been a Girl Scout for over 13 years.

Kailey plans to pursue a Ph.D. in neuroscience and to dedicate her career to researching Alzheimer's disease. She is currently considering her options for the location of her undergraduate studies, which include top choices of UCLA, USC and Berkeley.

New pickleball courts to open

The City of Orange will host a ribbon cutting to celebrate new pickleball courts and a fitness circuit at Hart Park on Wednesday, May 6 at 5 p.m.

The project features 10 lighted courts, shade seating and outdoor fitness equipment, funded primarily via a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The courts will be open from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m., available on a first come, first use basis. The courts may not be held or reserved; if players are waiting, drop-in play is limited to one game to 11 points.

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Woman's Club of Orange names winning gardeners



Sonia Cartagena shown with her Best Theme entry.



Debra Wilson and Pat Hamilton show off the blue ribbon rose that was grown in the WCO garden.



Pat and Cliff Campbell with their prize-winning arrangement.

The winners of the Woman's Club of Orange 87th Annual Spring Garden Show are: Best Rose, Raul Serna; Best Theme, Festival of Flowers, Sonia Cartagena; Best in Show, Kim Simovich, Jr. Best in

Show, Ryan Keil; President's Choice, Inez Gallina; and Judges' Choice, Cliff and Pat Campbell. First, second, and third place ribbons were awarded in each category.

Inspiring young women honored



From left, the Woman's Club of Orange Inspirational Young Women are Yanexy Solares, Natalie Martinez and Daisy Romero.

The Woman's Club of Orange's Inspirational Young Woman Award recognizes the accomplishments of exceptional young women graduating from the high schools in Orange Unified School District.

Each year, one student from each of the district high schools is chosen by her teachers and counselors to receive this award. Each of these young women will receive a commemorative pin that can be worn at graduation, a certificate of recognition and a gift of \$250.

Three of this year's recipients were honored at the club's April General Meeting.

Yanexy Solares from Villa Park High School is an exceptional student with an infectious smile and a positive attitude. She is a member of National Honor Society and Student Senate and has challenged herself academically with Honors and AP courses, earning a GPA of 4.63. In her sophomore year she was selected as a Simon Scholar, a highly competitive program that assists promising college-bound students with finances and guidance. Within this program, she serves as a Recruitment Leader. Outside of school, Solares participates in the Orange Police Explorers program, providing support for both city and county-wide events. She was recently promoted to the position of Explorer Sergeant. She enjoys drawing, singing and hiking, and plans to continue her education

at a university and go on to law school.

Natalie Martinez from El Modena High School lost her mother at the age of three, and was left in the care of her grandparents. She likes to say that she was raised by her "village" of family members who have always been there for her. Natalie likes to explore new places and new ideas. She has pushed herself academically by enrolling in AP and college courses and completed career pathways in patient care, business and criminal justice. She also started her own nail care business, using the profits to help to support herself and her family. She has never let fear of the unknown deter her from exploring new opportunities and taking on new challenges. She plans on attending Cal State Fullerton after graduation.

Daisy Romero from EDGE Virtual Academy has been influenced by her Mexican-American background that has encouraged success. Her dual cultural upbringing has given her a strong sense of identity and taught her the value of perseverance, hard work and family. Romero's counselor says that she excels academically and shows resilience and determination in reaching her goals. In the future, Daisy plans to work toward a career that will have a positive impact on others. In her spare time, Daisy enjoys reading, listening to music, making pastries and decorating.

America250! Community Event



SAR in full uniform.

The United States of America is celebrating the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

In honor of this milestone, the Daughters of the American Revolution Mojave Chapter (DAR) and the Sons of the American Revolution Orange County Chapter (SAR) invite the public to join us on Saturday, June 6 from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Orange Public Library for a free celebratory event.

Children of all ages may make a paper tricorn hat, learn how to write with a quill pen and ink, or make a cup and ball toy. Challenge yourself with American history trivia and learn about a variety of Revolutionary War historical items. See the SAR in full military regalia, and have your picture taken with them.

The library is located at 407 E. Chapman Ave.

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DAVID SILVA
Mo: 714-227-3822 | Call/RE: 01327642

MARKET SNAPSHOT
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MARCH 2026
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\$2.63M Avg. Sales Price ↓ 9%	\$3.13M Avg. List Price ↑ 7%	3 No. of Prop. Sold ↓ 36%	80 Avg. Days on Market ↓ 18%	\$775 Avg. Sales Price per Sqft. ↑ 14%
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DAVID SILVA
Mo: 714-227-3822 | Call/RE: 01327642

MARKET SNAPSHOT
TUSTIN, CA
MARCH 2026
Single Family

\$1.55M Avg. Sales Price ↑ 9%	\$2.12M Avg. List Price ↓ 5%	16 No. of Prop. Sold ↑ 2%	36 Avg. Days on Market ↓ 5%	\$761 Avg. Sales Price per Sqft. ↑ 6%
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DAVID SILVA
Mo: 714-227-3822 | Call/RE: 01327642

Event trifecta celebrates Orange

A new community tradition is coming to life in Old Towne Orange. "Celebrate Orange Weekend" debuts on May 2-3, bringing together three beloved local events into one vibrant celebration of community, culture and connection.



Rotary Club Car Show will follow May Parade.

Kicking off the festivities on Saturday, May 2 at 10 a.m., the 60th Orange May Parade will march down Chapman Avenue. Produced by the Orange Chamber of Commerce Foundation, this year's parade will celebrate America's 250th birthday and showcase the spirit of Orange through participation from local schools, businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations. Spectators can expect colorful floats, lively performances, and a strong sense of hometown pride.

Taking place in The Plaza from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., this popular culinary event will feature tastings from a variety of local restaurants, offering attendees a delicious way to experience the flavors of the community. Tickets for Taste of Orange are available now on the official event website.

make up Celebrate Orange Weekend are organized and hosted by local nonprofit organizations, with proceeds supporting programs and initiatives that directly benefit the Orange community.

Celebrate Orange Weekend is designed to bring residents and visitors together for a memorable experience in one of Southern California's most charming historic districts.

Finishing off the weekend on Sunday, May 3, the 30th Annual Orange Plaza Rotary Car Show will take place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Old Towne Orange. This long-standing favorite event draws car enthusiasts from across the region, showcasing a wide array of classic, vintage, and custom vehicles in a festive, family-friendly atmosphere.

"This new weekend celebration is all about honoring what makes Orange special—our people, our traditions, and our strong sense of community," said event organizers.

Following the parade, the celebration continues in the afternoon with the 20th Taste of Orange, hosted by the Assistance League of Orange Auxiliary group, the Orange Blossoms.

All three events that

For more information, event updates, and ticket details, see CelebrateOrange.org.

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City of Orange 2027 expenses enumerated

Orange City Council meetings have, March 24 and April 14, been largely budget workshops, addressing FY2026 expenditures and deferred projects, setting the stage for the City's budget for FY2027. The workshops are a necessary step in the process toward the May reveal of the Preliminary FY2027 Budget and the June budget adoption.

The proposed Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget totals \$35.6 million. The Skate Park at Grijalva is in a continuation phase, with planning and proposals completed, and is awaiting council approval of \$2.5 million for the construction.

Community and Library Services is proposing \$3.22 million for eight continuing projects and 10 new ones. El Modena Basin Area Improvements is listed as a continuing project, with the design RFP (\$230,000 budget) to be posted in the fall. Other continued projects include Grijalva Park Master Plan, Olive Park Net-

ting, Yorba Dog Park, Hart Park Baseball Diamond 1 Improvements, Parks Master Plan and Hart Park Bandshell Renovation.

New FY27 appropriation requests for continuation of existing projects tally \$2,015,000: new park in West Orange; parking lot pavement rehab; park restroom interior; sport court resurfacing; Rampart Street Park, El Modena Park improvements.

New projects proposed for FY2027 are Veterans Park Memorial Fountain Restoration, \$50,000; El Camino Sports Court resurfacing, \$155,000; Santiago Creek Trail, 3,000 linear feet of fencing replacement, \$200,000; playground equipment replacement, \$800,000.

Public Works presented its budget proposal, citing 30 new and 15 carryover projects, totaling \$26,493,946 for FY2027. Elevators at police headquarters, HVAC and painting, replacement of nine roll-up doors, repair of city streets, sewer and storm

drains improvements, replacement of Well 8.

Revenues will be allocated from specific grant funding, Measure M, 510 and county and state coffers.

Potential city revenue measures include City Charter measure, a Transient Occupancy Tax, utility tax, vacant property tax, cannabis tax, parking lot tax, a sales tax, residential caps and the potential sale of the Water Division.

Property taxes continue to be the largest revenue source for the city, but are not expected to increase substantially in 2027. The 2027 budget includes a decrease in workforce of approximately 56 full-time positions, to 689.7, or 3% below FY2026. However, the General Fund continues to face a structural imbalance, driven primarily by annual debt service obligations totaling approximately \$17.9 million, including \$16.2 million for Pension Obligation Bonds and \$1.7 million for Lease Revenue Bonds.

Fire Chief Alan Velasco presented a report on a proposed Ambulance Operator (AO) Program Enhancement, transitioning to an all AO-staffed transport model would provide fiscal and community benefits.

Parking fees

Per Mayor Dan Slater, the new pay-for-parking system in Old Towne Orange collects \$4,000-\$4,100 per day, and will add approximately \$1.5 million to city coffers per year. (The budget includes expenses of \$498,000 for the paid parking program.)

Residents, however, have been vocal about the initial two-hour limit that cannot be extended, making it difficult for any appointment, leisurely lunch, shopping, etc. A number of restaurants and shopkeepers, however, report an increase in dedicated traffic. Several businesses have offered to "pay" for the additional parking cost for their customers, in the form of a reduction on the bill total.

Assistance League honored

Join friends and neighbors for a memorable evening at the Community Foundation of Orange 2026 Gala, honoring the Assistance League of Orange on Thursday, June 4, from 6 to 9:30 p.m. at the Grand Gimeno Event Center in Orange.

This spirited night celebrates the local volunteers and programs that make Orange stronger—while treating guests to cocktails, dinner, live and silent auctions, and live country music by Ashley Felton, adding the perfect soundtrack to the evening.

Honoree Assistance League of Orange has spent decades providing hands on support to children and families through practical programs powered entirely by volunteers. The gala is a chance to celebrate that work, connect with community leaders, and support the future of Orange based nonprofits. For additional details, see CommunityFoundation-ofOrange.org.

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Tustin Sunset Market returns for the summer



Street scene from the Sunset Market.

By Guy Ball

The Tustin Sunset Market returns to Old Town Tustin on Thursday, May 21. The summer event takes place from 5 to 8:30 p.m. on the third Thursday evening of each month, from May through September. The family-friendly market draws thousands of attendees, offering a unique shopping experience, food trucks, an evening Farmers Market, and an evening of live entertainment, all set on a pedestrian-only street in the center of Tustin.

El Camino Real will be closed from 2nd Street to Main, allowing guests a peaceful stroll through one of Tustin's historic districts. The street fair features a variety of commercial and craft vendors, community or-

ganizations, a beer/wine garden and live music from several area bands.

The band for the opening night is Guilty Pleasure Makers, playing music from the 80s and 90s.

There is no admission charge, and some of the nearby restaurants are open for dinner. The Market is designed with all ages in mind, including stroller-friendly paths, kid-approved food and activities for the little ones. Leashed and well-behaved dogs are welcome.

Free parking is available on nearby streets and in three nearby city parking lots. Vendors and sponsors interested in participating on future dates are invited to visit Tustincommunity-foundation.org for more information.

Orange Elks work in the community



Elks, from left, Julie Sutton and Julie Brown present a check to Cameron Geringer-Pate of The Hub OC, as Kelly Martines and Garrett Hamblin look on.



Elks Julie Brown, Rick Clark, Karen Hyland and Phil Hyland serve lunch to GRIP participants.

Orange Elks recently worked with four of our Community Partners, giving back to our community.

The Orange Elks Antlers presented a check for

\$550 to the Orange Unified School District Special Education Department in support of their 2026 OUSD Olympiad Games. This is an athletic event celebrating

approximately 500 students with disabilities from across the Orange Unified School District. The event is May 1 at Fred Kelly Stadium in Orange.

The lodge donated \$1,000 to our Community Partner, the HUB OC, a local nonprofit resource center serving the unhoused and individuals experiencing hardship.

Next, we served lunch at the GRIP Soccer Camp. On the first day, lodge members served hot dogs and cheeseburgers; on the second day, Lamppost pizza was on the menu.

GRIP (Gang Reduction Intervention Partnership) is a program for kids between 8 and 12 years old that are pre-selected to participate in the program. The kids are middle school kids that are at-risk of gang involvement and drug use during a time when they have very little adult supervision.

The Orange Elks 1475 Team ended the week participating and supporting Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County "Walk to Feed OC."

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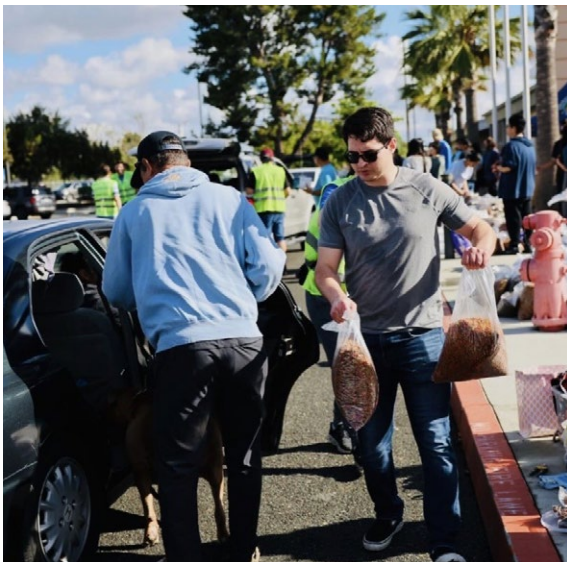
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Drive-through pantry assists pet parents with food, supplies



The drive through pet pantry

A happy pet

Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento

By Vicente Sarmiento 2nd District Supervisor

This April, our office partnered with OC Animal Care to sponsor our 3rd Annual Family Furst Drive-Thru Pet Pantry event.

Held at the OC Animal Care facility in Tustin, the event assisted nearly 1,800 pets and distributed over 31,000 pounds of pet food, plus pet supplies.

On that Saturday, over

423 cars come through the line. I was inspired by the Animal Care staff and shelter volunteers who worked the line assisting the residents. We were also joined by local volunteers from Boeing, Pacific Life, Chase Bank and UCI. The dedication and passion of the volunteers ensured the success of the event.

Our event was part of a series of drive-through pet pantry events held

on the second Tuesday of each month by OC Animal Care. The goal is to support pet owners in need by providing essential supplies that help keep their animals healthy, cared for, and safely out of shelters.

Many of our neighbors in Orange County are struggling, and sometimes go without just to be able to feed and take care of their pet companions. In fact, the ris-

ing costs for pet food and services are particularly affecting our seniors, many of whom are on fixed incomes.

I am happy to be able to assist them through our support of OC Animal Care, as well as the work our office does throughout the year with local non-profit groups that provide low or no-cost veterinary and spay and neuter services.

It was great meeting

the residents and their pet companions at the event. Many residents were there early, and everyone was treated respectfully.

If you or someone you know can use assistance, the pet pantry is open at OC Animal Care on the second Saturday of each month. For more details or to volunteer, you can find more information on the OC Animal Care website at ocpetinfo.com.

Orange Elk honor and support



From left, Elks Garrett Hamblin, Julie Sutton, Lynn Butler, Lisa Erickson of Breast Cancer Angels and Julie Brown

By Bill Neessen

The Orange Elks Lodge 1475 presented a check to Executive Director Lisa Erickson of Breast Cancer Angels.

This organization provides immediate support to individuals fighting breast cancer, helping ease the financial burdens that come with their journey.

The Lodge also donated \$1,000 to the Orange City Firefighters Foundation. Elks are proud to give back to our com-

munity to those who serve us every day.

The April Flags Over the Plaza honored Air Force Veteran Scott Conniff who passed away on March 1.

Conniff was a retired firefighter for the City of Orange, a United States Air Force veteran, a five-year Elk and a member of the American Legion.

A flag was raised in his honor and presented to his wife Monika.

The next Flags Over the Plaza will be May 21.



JC Cortez presenting the flag to Monika Conniff.



From left are Firefighters Chase Riley, Jarad Brewer, Colton and Orange Elk Kent Colton

Mr. Tustin – the Man-geant is back!

The 7th Annual Mr. Tustin pageant is back, a night of wholesome fun and revelry, benefiting the Miss Tustin Scholarship Association. Those men brave enough to showcase their charming personality, illustrious talent, wit, charm

and evening wear will be cheered on by the community.

The event will take place on Saturday, May 30 at the Santa Ana Elks Lodge #794, with food and drink available for purchase at 5 p.m., and the show beginning at

6 p.m. Donors may support the event with Big Hunk, Stud Muffin or "We Love Mr. Tustin" sponsorships. General admission is \$30; student admission is \$20, and children under 10 are free. See misstustin.org for tickets.