

LONG BEACH

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Courtesy of SpinLaunch

Long Beach-based SpinLaunch's innovative launch system in New Mexico aims to put satellites into orbit without the use of a rocket.

SpinLaunch inks NASA deal amid plans to disrupt aerospace

With SpinLaunch's approach, over 70% of the fuel and structures that comprise a typical rocket can be eliminated, according to the company.

By Christian May-Suzuki

The question of how to launch cargo into space without a massive fuel burden is a long-standing conundrum—and it's one that Long Beach-based SpinLaunch is out to solve.

And the company's answer—an innovative electric-powered Orbital Accelerator Launch System that uses kinetic energy as the fuel to break the atmospheric barrier, essentially throwing objects into space—is making major strides.

SpinLaunch's system involves a launch vehicle being attached to a mechanical arm that rotates inside of a large, circular vacuum chamber. Vehicles will reach speeds of up to 5,000 miles per hour before being released through an exit port. Once above the stratosphere, a small amount of fuel is used for a final propulsive stage that helps insert and position the payload in orbit.

It marks a significant change from the current accepted approach to space travel. Traditionally, rockets launched into space have been

required to dedicate 90% of their weight to fuel—a major challenge for the prospect of efficiently transporting cargo through space.

A NASA article written in 2012 by International Space Station Expedition 30 and 31 Flight Engineer Don Pettit stated that even a rocket consisting of 85% fuel was “on the extreme edge of our engineering ability to even fabricate.”

Saturn V—considered the most powerful rocket to have ever successfully launched, and one of few able to launch with 85% fuel—weighed approximately 6.2 million pounds when fueled. The maximum payload weight the rocket could take into orbit was just 260,145 pounds, or about 4% of the total weight.

Meanwhile, with SpinLaunch, over 70% of the fuel and structures

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Odys Aviation moves to Long Beach to develop new aircraft that will cut travel time, carbon emissions

By Brandon Richardson

Long Beach is now the home of one more aerospace startup.

Odys Aviation, which is striving to cut regional air travel times in half and drastically reduce carbon emissions with its new vertical

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Port of Long Beach welcomes 2 new aerospace tenants

By Christian May-Suzuki

The recent aerospace boom has come to the Port of Long Beach in the form of two new tenants that have arrived in the last year.

SpaceX—the Hawthorne-based company owned by Elon Musk—moved into a 6.5-acre property in May, and El Segundo-based ABL Space Systems followed suit by moving into a space directly adjacent to SpaceX in October.

The two new companies, though, aren't the port's first aerospace tenants.

The SpaceX site was formerly occupied by Sea Launch, a commercial satellite launch company that began calling Long Beach home when it was first founded in 1995. While it launched off of a floating spaceport in the Pacific, the company had facilities at

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Beach volleyball players practice as Superintendent-President Mike Muñoz speaks during a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Long Beach City College's new kinesiology and athletics facilities.

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SpinLaunch

Continued from cover

that comprise a typical rocket can be eliminated, according to the company, leaving more room for a payload in the launch vehicle's structure.

SpinLaunch was founded by Jonathan Yaney in 2014, and the team there has been at work ever since to develop the ideas that would bring Yaney's vision of less fuel-reliant space launches to life.

Recent technological advancements—particularly those in microelectronics—have given the SpinLaunch team the tools that it needs to turn the concept into a reality.

A smaller version of SpinLaunch's final Orbital Accelerator concept—the Suborbital Accelerator Launch System—ran a successful test launch with vehicle recovery in October.

“What started as an innovative idea to make space more accessible has materialized into a technically mature and game changing approach to launch,” Yaney said in a statement.

Having this successful launch under its belt is a major step forward for SpinLaunch. Now that the concept has proven to be feasible in practice, the company can take steps to finetune the system and ensure commercial viability.

This work hasn't gone unnoticed, with TIME magazine naming SpinLaunch one of the 100 most influential companies of 2022 late last month. The company also announced an agreement with NASA to further test the feasibility and gather data on SpinLaunch's technology for future commercial launch opportunities.

Under this agreement, SpinLaunch will develop and fly a NASA payload on the Suborbital Accelerator, which is expected to be completed later this year. The organizations will work together to analyze the data and gauge the system for potential flaws or room for improvement. They will then publish the launch environment data, following a full review.

“The recent launch agreement with NASA marks a key inflection point as SpinLaunch shifts focus from technology development to commercial offerings,” Yaney said.

The agreement is another big step toward SpinLaunch's next major goal: starting launches on its Orbital Accelerator for clients in 2025. With the successful test launch and this agreement, the company says it is on track to meet its goal of placing satellites in orbit through commercial launches and delivering payloads for clients by that year.

“SpinLaunch is helping customers eliminate the cost, time, and complexity constraints currently driving space-related business models,” the company said in a statement, “ultimately delivering less expensive, scalable access to space.” ■



Courtesy of Smarter Shows

People socialize on the showroom floor of the 2021 Space Tech Expo in Long Beach.

Space Tech Expo will bring aerospace companies together

By Christian May-Suzuki

Next month, over 3,000 members of the aerospace industry are set to converge in Long Beach once again.

The Space Tech Expo is making its return to the Long Beach Convention Center for its 10th iteration on May 24 and 25, with an invite-only preview the evening of May 23.

Exhibitors and speakers from the biggest names in the aerospace industry—from SpaceX and Lockheed Martin to NASA and the Federal Aviation Administration—will gather at the Long Beach Convention Center to connect and discuss new technologies and potential partnerships.

While many space conferences focus on niches within the broader

industry, event director Gordon McHattie said that the Space Tech Expo is meant to be a conference with wide-ranging topics to address the needs of any and all attendees.

“We would like to be all things to all people in the supply chain,” McHattie said over Zoom. “We’ve always had this goal to be a very broad supply chain show, where engineers or a technical lead can come and discuss various aspects of a program with completely different types of companies under one roof.”

One way the conference plans to achieve that is through the B2B Matchmaking program, which was brought over from the show's European counterpart, Space Tech Expo Europe. In the program, companies submit a summary of what they are buying or selling, and folks from other companies can sign up to hold a 20-minute meeting to potentially arrange to do business.

At its heart, though, McHattie said the Space Tech Expo is a trade show—a place where engineers and teams can come together to imagine new projects.

“Our job is to get the small companies exhibiting and get the large companies walking the show and discussing program opportunities,” he said, “and hopefully, purchasing products and services.”

New technologies will be on display, and smaller companies will be given the opportunity to advertise their work to the biggest players in the industry. Products will include satellite laser communications systems, custom hydraulic power units, tables built for running

vibration tests and more.

“Where I think this industry is the most exciting at the moment is this huge number of small startup companies that are coming along with new technologies, and the older and bigger guys are interested to see this new stuff,” McHattie said.

Led by Smarter Shows co-founder James Reeder—who McHattie said has a personal interest in the aerospace industry—the first Space Tech Expo was held at the Los Angeles Convention Center in 2011.

Unfortunately, the event did not go quite as smoothly as planned, mostly due to inexperience.

“It wasn't without challenges in the early days,” McHattie said.

One of the biggest issues was the location, which was far too large for the small conference. So the event organizers set out to find a better spot—but staying in the Los Angeles area was also important.

“When you're looking at El Segundo, you're looking at proximity for SpaceX, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon, so following them obviously seemed to make sense,” McHattie said.

In weighing both needs, Long Beach emerged as the perfect fit. The Space Tech Expo moved there the following year.

Aside from a brief stint in Pasadena, the expo has called Long Beach its home ever since.

While COVID derailed plans for the conference in 2020, McHattie and his team were able to host a conference with mandates in October.

“It was interesting because it

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FROM THE EDITOR: HAYLEY MUNGUIA

Q&A: How aerospace engineering at CSULB prepares students for the booming industry

The aerospace industry in Long Beach has changed so much in recent years, with the departure of Boeing and the arrival of newer companies like Rocket Lab and SpinLaunch. But one constant throughout Long Beach's aerospace history has been the expertise coming out of Cal State Long Beach.

I was curious to hear how the university sees its place in the rapidly evolving local industry, so I reached out to Hamid Rahai, who is the associate dean for Research & Graduate Studies for CSULB's College of Engineering and a professor in the Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering Department, to get his perspective.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

HAYLEY MUNGUIA: First off, can you tell me a little bit more about the department? Is there a lot of overlap with how CSULB approaches mechanical engineering and aerospace engineering, or are they two very distinct paths that students can take?

HAMID RAHAI: Generally, these are two different majors, and they are managed by one department: the Department of Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering. Initially, until 2000, they were separate departments, but in 2000, the faculty—because of the similarity and also kind of joint operations that they had been doing in terms of research and also sharing labs and resources—they decided to merge.

Now, these are two different degrees, although generally the foundations are all the same in terms of the math and science. Up to the junior level, students are all taking the same classes, and then at the junior level they start branching out into more specific courses. So aerospace engineering is taking aircraft design, space vehicle design, avionics and controls—it's more major-specific curriculum, and mechanical engineering is more machine design, manufacturing thermal design, general control systems for all these things and so on. So they branch out, but they are very similar in the sense of engineering fundamentals.

HM: So what has CSULB's relationship with the local aerospace industry been like over the years?

HR: Our relationship with aerospace in the city actually goes way back to the time of McDonnell Douglas. At the time, there was no aerospace engineering—it was all mechanical engineering. So McDonnell Douglas had great internship opportunities, and we also did a lot of services for them in terms of testing and in terms of design and design optimization services, and then we also had research projects that were more focused on optimizing aircraft structures and understanding the fundamentals of airflow characteristics around vehicles and the new generation of aerospace technology and so on.

There was a lot of work done during that period, and later, when McDonnell Douglas became the Boeing Company, then we also started working with Boeing, and we established a Boeing manufacturing lab on campus that was a hub for more research and contract opportunities, including internship opportunities for our students. Boeing engineers and researchers came and worked on campus, allowing students and faculty to

work on different projects. It was a great lab on our campus. There were actually three new technologies that were developed that are now being used in 737 and 747 manufacturing.

But then before COVID hit, with everything happening with Boeing, they decided to actually reduce operations here. There was not much needed in terms of the kind of activities we used to do. So Boeing left, but the partnership is still continuing in the form of service contracts and internships for our students.

HM: OK, and what about this newer crop of aerospace companies coming to Long Beach? We've got Virgin Orbit, Rocket Lab, SpinLaunch and Relativity, to name a few. Does CSULB have any type of relationship with them?

HR: Yes, we have a great relationship with them, with Virgin Orbit and with the other newcomers that are coming here including Wisk, which is establishing a kind of air taxi that is going to be starting at the Long Beach Airport. We are part of the Long Beach Economic Partnership, and as part of that partnership, there is a group called the Air Mobility Working Group, and this group is with Wisk. We're looking at what kind of engagement we can have with this company. They actually gave a contract to the Economics Department to look at feasibility studies on routes that they have to choose and the type of customers they can serve, so they have a prototype and autonomous aircraft right now that they are testing, and they're hoping this is the first generation of aircraft.

HM: Interesting. So how is your department involved?

HR: The Engineering Department is involved in the technical analysis, but we are just getting started. The partnership is very new, and this is a Bay Area company that is coming to Long Beach, so we're still exploring the engagement and the type of relationship that we'll have.

HM: OK, so bigger picture: Can you tell me about what these types of partnerships mean for students and how it affects their job placement after they graduate?

HR: That's something we're always thinking about. So in addition to partnering with these bigger companies, we also try to engage with their suppliers, which is a much bigger pool. For example, Boeing has 20,000 suppliers. So we think that if we can engage with these suppliers, then first of all it creates opportunities for our students in terms of jobs or internships. And at the same time, we are positioned to really serve this group because these are small companies that produce single components or small parts and different kinds of services, and being a large engineering school here, we have more than 150 joint faculty. We have more than 35 research labs. We have all kinds of capabilities.

I say this because we're kind of in a moment of flux. Up to 2019, before the pandemic, we have had structured internship programs. On average, we had, for example with Boeing, we had 15-20 paid internships each year, and I can tell you more than 90% of them got offered permanent positions.

But the pandemic has disrupted a lot of things. We couldn't sustain our service contracts. Our student interns could not work



Hamid Rahai

on site. So a lot of things were discontinued. We are trying to re-establish those programs, but the pandemic has changed the business world. Boeing has gone through a restructuring and has different objectives—the same as many other companies now. So we are trying to re-establish the same kind of activities that we had with these companies, but it could be in different forms.

They're still offering some kind of internships, but we used to have structured internships before—guaranteed internships for our students on an annual basis. We don't have that now, and I do not see the companies committing to that kind of relationship, so it is a work in progress.

HM: So do you have a sense yet of what these relationships will look like moving forward?

HR: We have to come up with new ways of doing things. We need to figure out what the new norm is for us and how we can take advantage of this new norm.

But I think we're in a good position to do that. We have hired more than 50 new faculty over the past six, seven years. We're hiring another eight this year. It's basically a really new generation of faculty that we are bringing on board with significantly different advanced expertise, and our goal is to serve our local community and local industries around us. That's where we are going. We are going to see a significant increase in our partnerships—obviously the aerospace industry is dominant here, so we are looking forward to re-establishing and expanding our relationships with the aerospace industry, but at the same time we are looking to expand our relationships with utility companies, with the ports, with biomedical companies and so on.

There is a lot happening, and we're looking forward to continuing to serve our local industries in new ways. ■

Odys Aviation

Continued from cover

takeoff and landing (VTOL) craft, has moved its headquarters to Long Beach, the company announced last week.

Getting to airfields combined with the long security screening process at many airports can add hours to overall travel time for flights that are themselves as short as 40 minutes, Odys co-founder and CEO James Dorris said.

“The world is traveling more and, frankly, people are enjoying traveling less and less,” Dorris said in a phone interview with the Business Journal.

“We’ve also got a lot of concerns about sustainability and climate change,” Dorris added, “and we’re in an environment now where there’s a significant amount of investment going into businesses and startups providing solutions.”

The firm recently raised \$13.7 million in seed funding to accelerate the development of its hybrid-electric aircraft.

While still in the early development stages, the Odys craft’s current design features a wingspan of less than 50 feet with 16 rotor systems that will allow for vertical takeoff and landing in addition to cruise applications. There may be larger craft in the future, Dorris said, but for now, the configuration accommodates nine passengers along with two pilots.

The company is currently developing a one-seater version of the craft, which will be flown remotely, for a six-to-nine-month testing period set to begin this fall, Dorris said. Simultaneously, the firm is working on the first full-scale prototype, with the first flight slated for late 2023.

Dorris said the company expects the craft to be certified in late 2026 and to enter into service in 2027.

Standard security screening by



A rendering of a vertical takeoff and landing aircraft in development by Odys Aviation, which just announced its relocation to Long Beach.

the U.S. Transportation Security Administration is only required for craft that carry 30 or more people, Dorris said. Since the new VTOL craft’s capacity is under that threshold, it will not require passengers to undergo TSA security checks, but rather a faster screening process, reducing travel time.

The utilization of smaller municipal and general aviation airports such as Long Beach, Palo Alto and dozens of others also will ease travel time and stress for passengers without the need for new infrastructure to be built, Dorris said.

In the future, the wingspan of the craft will allow it to land on most helipads, Dorris said, as well as infrastructure created by other air mobility companies in the coming years. For now, however, the focus is the existing infrastructure at small airports.

“We think that having that low friction to starting operations is super important,” Dorris said. “We can fly on existing flight corridors, from existing towers and existing air

traffic control rules.”

The maximum range of the Odys craft is about 1,000 miles, Dorris said, but the “sweet spot” is 100-to-600-mile trips that would have passengers in the air for less than two hours, he added.

The battery will be able to power the vehicle for about 200 miles, Dorris said. For longer flights, the craft would switch over to normal jet fuel.

Aboard normal commercial planes, regional flights are mostly takeoff and descent, Dorris said, with planes not operating at a cruising altitude—which is when they are most fuel efficient—for very long.

“So these regional routes actually have a significant amount of CO2 per passenger mile, relative to longer routes,” Dorris said, adding that emissions on a 350-mile flight would be cut by about 83% with Odys’ aircraft.

“We can have a big impact,” Dorris said.

Odys is the second air mobility company to announce its interest

in Long Beach in the last month and a half. In early March, Wisk Aero, which is developing an all-electric autonomous air taxi, teamed up with the Long Beach Economic Partnership to study the feasibility of the tech in the city and across the region.

“From the very first flight, to the Jet Age, and now the emergence of advanced air mobility, the aviation industry constantly evolves,” Long Beach Airport Director Cynthia Guidry said in an email. “We are eager to learn more about how this rapidly developing sector will address mobility options in a sustainable manner.”

The future of the sector is autonomous, Dorris said, but that reality is still “a long way off.” The perception of safety is just as important as the reality of it, he explained, which is why Odys will start out with two uniformed pilots, despite being certified for single-pilot operation.

After Odys establishes a track record for safety, the company will transition to single-pilot flights, Dorris said.

The company recently signed a lease for 15,000 square feet of office and hangar space with Ross Aviation at Long Beach Airport, Greg McQueary, general manager of Ross at the municipal airport, confirmed. The space has been vacant for about 15 years, McQueary added.

Dorris said the company is renovating its new office space and that the hangar is already being utilized to further the development of the company’s aircraft.

The site serves as Odys headquarters, according to Dorris. The firm has one other off-site testing facility.

“There is no better place to do big hardware transportation companies than Los Angeles,” Dorris said. “Frankly, with the amount of companies aggregating around Long Beach Airport, there’s just a great talent pool to pick from. It’s a great community.” ■

Construction continues for Relativity in former C-17 site

By Brandon Richardson

The transformation of the long-vacant Boeing C-17 site—a 93-acre property west of Long Beach Airport that includes a 1.1 million-square-foot hangar—is well underway, with portions of the renovation project already completed and occupied by the latest tenant, rocket manufacturer and launch service provider Relativity Space.

Construction to turn the aging airplane manufacturing hangar into a combined office-rocket manufacturing headquarters for the firm began late last year, several months after the Relativity’s announcement in June that it had signed a 16.5-year lease agreement with the property’s owner, Australian-based developer The Goodman Group.

The initial phase of construction, which included the office space, is complete, and the first teams have moved into their new home, according to Director of Infrastructure Jonathan Lund.

Relativity is still in the process of building out the factory space to full manufacturing capabilities, but the firm already has begun using its large, patented 3D printers to produce its rocket components.

“Over the course of the next year, we will continue building out the remainder of our manufacturing areas, and begin improvements to the exterior of the building,” Lund said in an email to the Business Journal.

While many manufacturers use 3D-printing technology to create various components for rockets, Relativity is the first to produce a fully 3D-printed spacecraft—from the hull to the engine. To accomplish this, the firm developed the world’s largest 3D printer, which it dubbed

StarGate, and its own metal alloy.

The company’s debut flight vehicle, the Terran 1, is slated for its first launch later this year at Relativity’s Cape Canaveral complex. A date for the mission has not been set.

In January, Relativity completed the first full duration mission cycle test of its Aeon engine, which ran for 310 seconds—the longest test to date, Lund said. The company completed structural testing of the Terran 1 in February, finalizing all full-scale structural testing of the launch vehicle.

Most recently, Relativity completed its first successful test of the vehicle’s second stage, which included a 60-second full duration hot fire test at NASA’s Stennis Space Center in Mississippi.

Three weeks before it announced its lease of the C-17 site, Relativity unveiled its plans for the first fully reusable, entirely 3D-printed rocket: the Terran R. The larger launch vehicle also will be manufactured in Long Beach, though it’s still in the

development stage.

The Long Beach company also is in the development phase of a second launch complex at the Vandenberg Space Force Base just outside of Lompoc on the California coast.

“Relativity is the first and only venture-backed company with a right of entry directly with the U.S. Air Force at historic Launch Complex 16,” Lund said.

The company’s Vandenberg operation includes a launch pad, propellant farms and gas storage as well as an integration hangar and logistics area, payload processing facility and a launch control center. Last year, Relativity completed the installation of the propellant farms for liquified natural gas and oxygen storage. The firm also constructed its hangar while licensing through the Federal Aviation Administration continues, Lund said.

Relativity was founded by Tim Ellis and Jordan Noone in a Seattle WeWork space in December 2015.

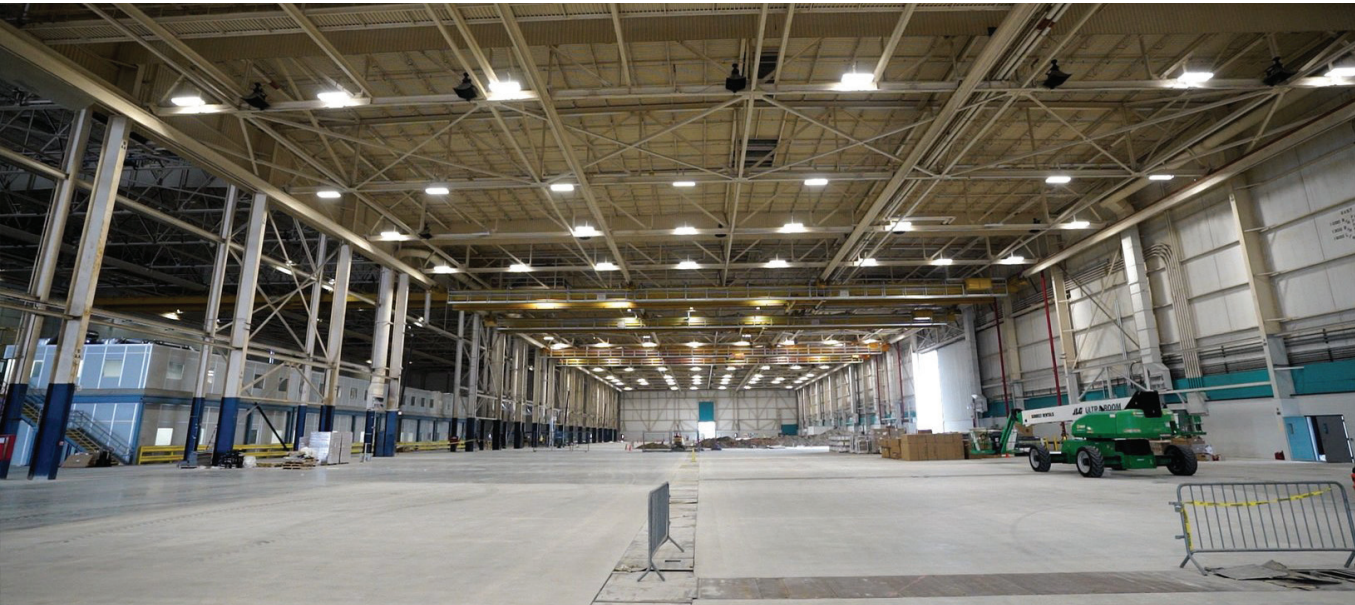
The company relocated to Long Beach in 2020, taking up residence in a brand new 120,000-square-foot building in the Pacific Edge industrial park at East Burnett Street and Redondo Avenue.

The company will operate out of both that facility and the new headquarters even after construction is complete.

Since its move to Long Beach almost two years ago, Relativity’s workforce has grown from just over 100 employees to over 750, according to Lund.

“Our new headquarters has the capacity to ultimately support hundreds more,” Lund added.

Last year, the state awarded Relativity a large tax credit as part of California Competes, an income tax credit given to select businesses that are relocating to or expanding in the state. The \$30 million tax credit requires Relativity to grow its workforce to nearly 1,100 and invest nearly \$320 million by the end of the 2025 tax year. ■



The first phase of construction inside the former Boeing C-17 site has been completed, and the first Relativity Space teams have moved in.

Port Tenants

Continued from cover

the Port of Long Beach that served as its shoreside base of operations.

Currently, Sea Launch’s operations are on hold. The last launch occurred in 2014, and a Russian firm purchased the company four years later before moving its command ship and launch platform to the coast of Vladivostok, Russia, in 2020.

The departure left a hole at the port that officials, at the time, were not quite sure how to fill.

“When Sea Launch exited, the question was who was going to replace” it, Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said. “Our answer has been moving to our future.”

As the first space companies to come to the port since Sea Launch’s arrival over 20 years ago, SpaceX and ABL Space Systems are opening up new opportunities, according to Cordero.

“For us, it’s not just about moving cargo,” Cordero said on a call. “It’s about moving information and how we create greater efficiencies [in] technology.”

And, of course, it’s about creating jobs.

“These companies are allowing us to keep talent and knowledge local,” said Matt Schultz, the deputy director of the Economic Development Department and the executive director of the Pacific Gateway Workforce Innovation Network.

An ABL Space Systems spokesperson said that the company is still scaling up operations at the facility and is

expected to have about 50-60 employees at its Long Beach site when it is operating at full capacity. That number could change based on “evolving operational requirements,” according to the spokesperson.

What those jobs will entail, though, is unclear. ABL Space Systems uses its new Port of Long Beach facility for “a variety of operations, including maritime activities and a broad scope integration and operations,” the spokesperson said, but the company declined to expand further.

SpaceX representatives, meanwhile, did not respond to requests for comment on the company’s Long Beach operations.

Cordero, though, is pleased with the new occupants. Increasing the range of operations at the port beyond the direct delivery of cargo,

he said, has become a key part of the port’s plan to expand its workforce.

“Clearly, [the technology and space system sectors are] the future with regard to what it brings to the Port of Long Beach and the city of Long Beach, in terms of the diversification of the workforce,” Cordero said.

While there are no concrete plans to seek out new space tenants for the Port of Long Beach at this time, according to Cordero, Schultz says there are multiple companies in the industry “actively seeking a location in Long Beach.”

Port officials, though, are focused on fostering the relationship with SpaceX and ABL Space Systems, which Cordero said have blossomed since they moved in.

“I’m very optimistic,” he said, “that the relationship is going to expand in both instances.” ■

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Rocket Lab's "Without Mission A Beat" takes off from New Zealand.



A Rocket Lab recovery team member stands by the firm's Sikorsky S-92 helicopter.

Rocket Lab to attempt to catch a rocket mid-air

By Brandon Richardson

Long Beach-based spacecraft manufacturer and launch service provider Rocket Lab is set to attempt to catch its rocket in mid-air as it falls back to Earth from space, the company announced earlier this month.

The "There and Back Again" mission is set to blast off from the firm's New Zealand facility as early as April 19, carrying a payload of 34 satellites in one of Rocket Lab's Electron vehicles.

About two and a half minutes after liftoff, the first stage of the rocket will separate from the second and begin its fall back to Earth at about 5,150 mph, reaching temperatures of over 4,352 degrees. A drogue parachute will deploy at an altitude of 8.3 miles, followed by the main parachute at 3.7 miles, slowing the rocket to about 22 mph.

When the stage enters the capture zone, Rocket Lab's recovery team will attempt to catch it by the parachute, using a hook attached to a Sikorsky S-92 helicopter. Once secured, the crew will transport the stage back to land for analysis and potential re-flight.

"We're excited to enter this next phase of the Electron recovery

program," founder and CEO Peter Beck said in the announcement. "Trying to catch a rocket as it falls back to Earth is no easy feat, we're absolutely threading the needle here, but pushing the limits with such complex operations is in our DNA."

Rocket Lab has conducted numerous successful helicopter captures using replicas of the rocket stage and carried out extensive parachute tests, the company stated.

The firm also has three successful ocean recovery missions for the Electron under its belt, including its Nov. 18 "Love at First Insight" mission. Analysis from the ocean recoveries informed design modifications that enabled Electron to better withstand the unforgiving re-entry environment as well as develop procedures for an eventual helicopter capture.

"Now it's time to put it all together for the first time and pluck Electron from the skies," Beck said.

"There and Back Again" is a rideshare mission, which includes satellites from Alba Orbital, Astrix Astronautics, Aurora Propulsion Technologies, E-Space, Unseenlabs and Swarm Technologies via global launch services provider Spaceflight. The mission will be

Rocket Lab's third of the year and 26th launch overall.

"We expect to learn a tremendous amount from the mission as we work toward the ultimate goal of making Electron the first reusable orbital small sat launcher," Beck said, "and providing our customers with even more launch availability."

Rocket Lab's fourth mission of 2022 is slated to launch May 3. The mission is the company's first journey to the moon and is part of NASA's Cislunar Autonomous Positioning System Technology Operations and Navigation Experiment, also known as CAPSTONE.

News of the new mission came shortly after the company announced it successfully delivered two satellites into orbit earlier this month, bringing the total number of satellites the firm has sent to space to 112.

"Without Mission A Beat" blasted off from the company's Launch Complex 1 on New Zealand's Mahia Peninsula on April 2 at 5:41 a.m. local time carrying a pair of satellites for real-time geospatial intelligence company BlackSky.

The mission was Rocket Lab's fourth with BlackSky, with three taking off in 2021. The Long Beach company

is slated to deploy another pair of satellites for BlackSky later this year.

"The launch of these latest two satellites enhances our capacity-on-demand offering for customers," BlackSky COO Nick Merski said in a statement. "We continue to build on our strategic intelligence advantage as we expand our constellation, ensuring commercial and our government customers are the first to know about the changes that matter most to them."

The payload included two Gen-2 Earth-imaging satellites placed in a circular orbit more than 267 miles above the planet's surface. With the new additions, BlackSky's satellite constellation now consists of 14 satellites.

The satellites provide high-frequency monitoring of locations around the world to deliver real-time alerts, data and information for various industries.

"The past few missions for BlackSky showcase the benefits of a dedicated launch on Electron: quick constellation expansion, streamlined access to space, and fast delivery of global insights to BlackSky customers," Beck said in a statement. "Rocket Lab is proud to play its part." ■

Space Tech Expo

Continued from page 4

went well," McHattie said. "It was a good show, but we were down on numbers. I think we were around at least 25% down on numbers."

It's unclear whether attendance this year will match its pre-COVID level, but organizers expect significantly more interest this time around.

"People want to do trade shows

again," McHattie said. "They want to meet and shake hands and talk business."

The invite-only preview, held in the evening to accommodate folks with busy work schedules, will likely help.

"This is an initiative to be able to bring some of these engineering and manufacturing teams to just preview the exhibits," McHattie said. "We get feedback from a lot of the engineering groups that they would like to attend the event but can't necessarily always do it in

office hours."

For those interested in attending the expo, registration is free. Event organizers first decided to eliminate the admission fee last year, which McHattie said was done in an effort to attract the desired audience.

"What we found over the years is that there's been a bit of a disparity between who pays for conference passes and who exhibitors want to meet," McHattie said. "The people who pay for a conference pass quite often are business development or C-level executives, not necessarily

the technical type."

McHattie said that the conference learned it would still be able to function without that revenue after an initial test run at the European show, mostly because exhibitors still pay to be featured. Because of that, organizers agreed keeping attendance free was the best approach.

"We got huge numbers of engineers attending that show," McHattie said, "and it was so successful, we stuck with it and we figured out how to do it in the U.S. show as well." ■

City inspectors are closing more restaurants for health violations

Closures have been far more frequent this year than in the pre-COVID-19 days of early 2020.

By Tim Grobaty

There've been worse times to be in the restaurant business, but not many.

Obviously things were horrible for the business sector during the height of COVID-19 when restaurant shutterings were as common as a new Hollywood superhero movie. That era of the coronavirus pandemic, especially during the spring of 2020, practically drove a stake into the heart of the industry.

Now, after taking what looked to be a knockout punch, the restaurant business is slowly getting up on very wobbly legs, recovering a bit from the coronavirus, and now being slammed by inflation, trouble finding workers, and the latest: a fear of health inspections.

Although officials say the Health Department is doing what it's always done with regard to restaurant inspections—visiting each place at least once a year and reacting to customer complaints and issuing citations and ordering closures when evidence of vermin is detected or other safety issues arise, such as no hot or potable water—closures have been far more frequent this year than in the pre-COVID-19 days of early 2020.

In the first three months of 2020—those months before COVID when things were still relatively normal—the city shut down seven restaurants, two for water or sewage issues and the rest for vermin. In the first three months of this year, there have already been 19 closures, one for no hot water and 18 for vermin.

The list of restaurant closures is published on the Health Department's website and includes some notable places, such as Parkers' Lighthouse, Liv's, the 4th Horseman and Portfolio Coffeehouse.

Health inspections, which can result in brief or extended closures of food businesses, aren't something restaurateurs are eager to talk

about—they're like moles afraid to pop up and show themselves for fear of being whacked.

"I don't want to jinx anything," one told me.

"I don't think I deserved to be cited, but I'm not going to talk about it because I don't like to remind people that I was closed for an infraction," said another. "It's embarrassing."

The Health Department rarely revokes a license permanently—a notable exception was Restauration in January 2021, after the owner repeatedly flouted COVID-19 health orders, officials say. When the city closes restaurants, it's only for as long as it takes for the issue to be rectified, typically a day or two but occasionally for a week or longer.

Despite the increased number of citations and closures this year, the Health Department says it is not targeting the industry and that inspectors try to be reasonable when it comes to infractions.

"We do have an education-first approach where possible but we are required to close under certain circumstances, such as the presence of vermin," Long Beach Health Department spokesperson Jennifer Rice-Epstein wrote in an email. "These closures were conducted by different Health Inspectors assigned to their designated food districts, and not a single health inspector. Inspectors range in experience from four to 32 years, and inspectors obtain supervisor approval before temporarily suspending a health permit."

Luis Navarro is one of the few restaurant owners to go on the record with dissatisfaction regarding inspections. He said he's been visited eight times by health inspectors since January, a number boosted by the fact that he and his wife, Brenda, own four dining establishments in town: Lola's Mexican Cuisine spots on Fourth Street's Retro Row and in Bixby Knolls, the Social List on Retro Row and Portuguese Bend Restaurant and Distillery in Downtown.

He's been cited but not forced to close at any point, but he still doesn't care for the process and the frequency of inspections.

"I'm not questioning the closures, not making excuses," said Navarro. "But they don't want to talk about it. They cited me for my dish-washing

Long Beach unemployment rate falls from 6.4% to 5.5%

By Brandon Richardson

Unemployment in Long Beach fell almost a full percentage point in February, from 6.4% to 5.5%, according to data recently released by the California Employment Development Department.

The city's unemployment rate has historically trailed just behind Los Angeles County's rate, but the gap grew even wider amid the recovery following the pandemic spike that saw the rates climb as high as 19% and 18.8%, respectively. The biggest difference between the two—1.6 percentage points—was in December 2020.

Long Beach's February decrease, however, still has it trailing behind 68% of the county's 134 other cities and communities. Only 27.6% of the county has a higher unemployment rate than Long Beach.

Five other cities—Bell, El Segundo, Glendale, Lawndale and LA—have the same unemployment rate as Long Beach.

At the state level, the unemployment rate decreased to 4.8% in February, down from 5.5% the month before.

"California's labor market has had a very encouraging start to the year,"

Taner Osman, research manager at Beacon Economics and the Center for Economic Forecasting, said in a statement. "And now that many of the public health mandates restricting activity have been removed, and there is a jobs deficit in the state compared to the nation, we should continue to see strong job growth in the coming months."

The city's labor force grew by 1,600 people from 233,800 in January to 235,400 in February, according to state data. The number of employed Long Beach residents, meanwhile, increased by 3,600 people to 222,400.

The number of unemployed Long Beach residents decreased from 15,000 in January to 13,000 in February.

Countywide, staffing levels increased in all industry sectors except mining and logging, which had no change, according to the EDD. Two sectors—leisure and hospitality, and education and health services—accounted for 34% of the nonfarm employment increase.

Three sectors, including educational and health services, construction, and professional and business services, have surpassed pre-pandemic levels, according to the EDD. ■



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Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero talks during a press conference in the Port of Long Beach to launch the new Clean Truck Fund rate. *Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal*

Long Beach and LA ports start collecting clean truck fee

By Christian May-Suzuki

The San Pedro Bay Ports have begun implementing the long-planned clean truck fee to further their sustainability efforts. Under the Clean Truck Fund rate program, cargo that is not being transported on zero-emission vehicles is subject to the tariff, which is \$10 per 20-foot-equivalent unit—the standard measurement for shipped cargo—and \$20 for every container that is larger than that. The fee, which went into

effect April 1 and will be charged to the companies that own the shipments, is expected to generate \$90 million in the first 12 months, according to port officials. Money generated from the fee will be used to purchase newer zero-emission vehicles, which will accelerate the ports’ ability to phase out older trucks. “We are here to celebrate a first-of-its-kind program that enables us to convert our fleet to zero-emission trucks that will come in and out of our ports,” Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia said during a press conference.

The fee is part of the Clean Truck Program in the ports’ Clean Air Action Plan. The tariffs were officially approved in November 2021. “This is another important step in our commitment to CAAP and our broader climate efforts,” Garcia said. Zero-emission trucks and the cargo they transport are entirely spared from the fee, but natural gas powered trucks that emit low amounts of nitrogen oxides—also known as low NOx trucks—were also given an exemption from the fee that will last over a decade in Long Beach. That decision came with opposition and controversy after

a joint investigation by the Los Angeles Times and news outlet Floodlight in partnership with the Guardian revealed that gas companies paid residents to advocate for the exemption. The Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners in May voted in favor of making the natural gas truck exception permanent, but public pushback forced both ports to add sunsets to the exemptions. The ports are launching their programs separately, and one of the differences is seen in the way the exemption is treated. The Port of Long Beach has stricter

Continued on page 20

Grocery union approves new contract

By Brandon Richardson

Tens of thousands of Southern California grocery workers, including 800 in Long Beach, voted last week to ratify a new contract after contentious negotiations between union leaders and representatives for Albertsons, Pavilions, Ralphs and Vons stores. A tentative agreement was announced April 5 after months of negotiations, including a marathon 30-hour bargaining session, but it required member approval. “[Union] members came together and worked tirelessly for this contract,” Christine Martinez, a pharmacy technician at Ralphs in Placentia, said in a statement. “We were loud and clear that we deserved a contract that reflects our hard work.” Negotiations heated up the week

before the previous contract expired on March 6. Three weeks later, with no agreement reached, members of United Food and Commercial Workers Union locals 8GS, 135, 324, 770, 1167, 1428 and 1442 voted to authorize a strike, which would never come to pass. Union officials were seeking a \$5-per-hour raise phased in over three years along with improved safety standards and scheduling. The stores were offering \$1.80 raises, also phased in over three years. The ratified contract awarded workers a \$4.25-per-hour increase over three years, starting with a \$2-per-hour raise retroactive to March 7, according to documents obtained by the Business Journal. The agreement also guarantees all fully available part-time employees a minimum of 28 hours per week as well as increased benefits and updated safety and security commitments.

“This historic contract sets the standard for what’s possible for workers—not only in the grocery industry, but industries throughout the country,” Pio Figueroa, a food clerk at Ralphs in Laguna Beach said in a statement. “This is a huge victory for workers, and demonstrates how essential we are to our communities.” The contract applies to over 47,000 grocery workers at about 540 stores, including 10 in Long Beach represented by UFCW Local 324. In a statement, Ralphs Vice President of Operations Robert Branton said the company is “pleased” that an agreement has been reached. “The agreement comes after thoughtful and productive work by both the company and union bargaining committees,” Branton said. “This contract is an affirmation

of our commitment to providing a competitive total benefits package for our associates and further establishes Ralphs as a great place to work.” The announcement of the ratified contract came less than a week after the members of the same union voted to approve a similar contract with Stater Bros., which impacts 13,000 grocery workers at 170 locations, including about 100 at one store in Long Beach. “By ratifying this contract, Stater Bros. workers have secured life-changing raises, better healthcare, and protected pensions over the next three years,” the locals said in an April 9 joint statement. “After more than two years of risking their lives to serve California’s communities as essential workers, the members of UFCW stood together for their families and each other, and secured one of the most historic contracts in California labor history.” ■

DLBA survey shows optimism for recovery

By Christian May-Suzuki

The COVID-19 pandemic hasn’t changed how Downtown Long Beach businesses are viewing their physical office spaces—but it has made hiring and retaining employees a challenge. Still, an annual survey has hinted that a return to normalcy may be on the horizon. The Downtown Long Beach Alliance earlier this month released preliminary findings from its Annual Business Survey, which included input from 250 businesses from Jan. 3 to Feb. 28. While remote work has become more prevalent during the pandemic, most Downtown businesses still value their physical presence, with 66% of respondents saying they had no plans to change their physical workspace. This included office-based businesses, whose workers are able to work from home more conveniently and often

than those in other sectors. These results could stem, in part, from natural growth patterns. Businesses under a year old reported more plans for increases in space, while older and more established businesses were more likely to indicate they were looking to reduce their spaces. The desire to keep a physical office space or storefront, though, doesn’t mean businesses aren’t accommodating remote work. DLBA officials believe some tenants are still looking to rent the same spaces while offering remote work through hybrid schedules. The DLBA itself, for example, is maintaining its office space at 100 W. Broadway while allowing employees to split their schedules between time at home and time in the office. “It’s flexible but on paper, we are still paying for the same amount of office space in our building,” DLBA Research and Policy Analyst Morris Mills said. “We’re not downsized or anything.” “If we were to ask about

utilization in terms of actual employees going to the office, I would assume it’s probably lower,” Mills added. Other business concerns haven’t changed much over the course of the pandemic, according to the survey. “The business community has been consistent over the past 18-24 months on key issues they are facing,” Mills said, “such as hiring and retaining employees, permitting, quality of life and safety.” When it comes to hiring, the survey tells a similar story to others conducted on a nationwide scale. Only 57% of businesses said they were able to recruit skilled workers “within the Long Beach market,” 4 percentage points lower than in 2020-21 and 2019-20. The National Federation of Independent Businesses’ March 2022 Jobs Report also showed that the inability to find skilled workers was still the most prevalent issue among the 560

businesses surveyed. However, that trend could be slowly changing. About 20% of businesses surveyed by the DLBA reported they had more employees than the prior year, up from 12% last year and 17% in 2019-20. Mills said that while that number is encouraging, it essentially translates to a return to a normal employee base for businesses that had to downsize during the worst points of the pandemic. “I would say it’s still on the upward curve [and represents] resilience, rather than surpassing anything that [businesses] would have had before,” Mills said. “Small businesses in Downtown appear to be cautiously optimistic as we begin what is expected to be a lengthy recovery period from the economic impacts of the pandemic.” Full survey results will be included in the DLBA’s Annual Economic Profile, which will be released April 25. ■

Lawsuit alleges LBCC violated minimum wage laws by not paying teachers for work outside of classroom

By Jason Ruiz

A class-action lawsuit over alleged violations of California minimum wage laws was filed against the Long Beach Community College District earlier this month by two part-time LBCC professors who claimed that the district requires part-time teachers to work for free outside of class hours. The suit, which was filed in Los Angeles Superior Court on April 4, could affect hundreds of part-time faculty members. California minimum wage is currently \$15 per hour. On average, part-time faculty are paid a few dollars less per hour than full-time faculty members, according to salary schedules approved by the Board of Trustees for each group. The current contract with part-time faculty expires at the end of June. The plaintiffs in the suit, Karen Roberts and Seija Rohkea, are both art history professors at the college. They said during an April 4 press conference that the college has knowingly allowed unfair and illegal labor practices to persist by not compensating part-time professors for things like preparing for class, meeting with students to discuss assignments and even grading coursework. “Asking us to work for free is wrong, unethical and shows a lack of regard for employees who

are expected to help carry out the mission of the college,” Roberts said. Roberts, the former president of the part-time faculty union, said that these issues have been raised with the Board of Trustees during past labor negotiations but they’ve ‘fallen on deaf ears’ and led to the current

Rohkea said, the 38 minutes of office time is eclipsed, leaving the rest of that time unpaid. “Because we’re dedicated to our students, we do it anyway,” Rohkea said. A spokesperson for the college declined to comment on pending litigation.

pay with interest and contributions to their retirement accounts over the affected period, which spans the last three years. How much it could end up costing the district is unclear. Goldsmith said that through discovery she hopes to determine how many of the over 600 part-time faculty at LBCC have been affected by the district’s policies. “We think it’s easily in the millions of dollars,” Goldsmith said. A number of California education unions including the California Teacher’s Association, California Federation of Teachers and Community College Association were present at the virtual press conference and supported the claims made in the suit. The CTA is also backing a recently introduced state bill that could address inequities in pay between full-time and part-time community college professors. Assembly Bill 1752, which was introduced in February, seeks to create a defined pay structure for part-time faculty that would be “at least the same ratio” to the full-time faculty for comparable duties. As written, it would require community college districts to negotiate new wage structures with part-time faculty when the current contracts end or upon the bill being chaptered into law if an existing agreement is not in place through January 2023. ■

“Asking us to work for free is wrong, unethical and shows a lack of regard for employees who are expected to help carry out the mission of the college.”

- Karen Roberts, LBCC Art History Professor

working conditions that they’re suing over. Rohkea said that professors are paid for three hours and 38 minutes per class per week, which breaks down to three hours for class time and 38 minutes for office hours to meet with students. With an average of 30 students per semester,

Eileen Goldsmith, a lawyer representing the part-time faculty in the suit, claimed that this a common practice among community college districts in the state as they seek to reduce costs by underpaying adjunct professors. The teachers are seeking a host of monetary damages including back-

Laserfiche celebrates grand opening of new Bixby Knolls headquarters

By Christian May-Suzuki
Photos by Brandon Richardson

Laserfiche, the Long Beach-based software company that specializes in business management products, has unveiled its new global headquarters. Officials celebrated the grand opening of the 102,840-square-foot, four-story facility at 3443 Long Beach Blvd. earlier this month.



Dozens of people turned out for the grand opening celebration of the new Laserfiche headquarters in Bixby Knolls.

The project, according to the developers, was built with a “biophilic” vision, which is a design philosophy that looks “to increase occupant connectivity to the natural environment.” The concept won the Los Angeles Business Journal 2022 Commercial Real Estate Award. “Our objective with this building,” Laserfiche CEO Chris Wacker said during the ceremony, was “to create the best possible

experience for anyone who comes to talk, to meet to discuss ideas to close deals or just to be with peers and business partners.” The building achieves that vision with natural light throughout the entire building by way of floor-to-ceiling windows that offer 270-degree views, a roof cooling system that reduces the heat-island effect and the reintroduction of greenery to the site, which is a

remediated oil field. To mitigate solar heating, the project was built with features like vertical and horizontal fins around windows to help shade the interior, which has created an environment less reliant on electric heating and cooling systems. The workspace, which can accommodate 550 employees at one time, is vast and open. And though it was planned before the COVID-19 pandemic, it includes features that will enable a hybrid workforce. Meeting rooms were specifically designed to accommodate video conferencing with employees at home, for example, by setting up V-shaped tables with a camera at the end for full visibility. “Our workspaces are modular and flexible, readily adapted to ideally fit the occupant’s and the occasion’s needs,” Wacker said.

Work on the new building began in 2019, when company officials imagined their in-office payroll would soon outgrow the leased property at 3545 Long Beach Blvd. that served as Laserfiche headquarters. While the plan at the time was to keep both buildings occupied, the emergence of a hybrid workforce during the pandemic rendered the original building unnecessary. As such, the debut of the award-winning project marks a new chapter for Laserfiche, which was founded in April 1976 by Wacker’s wife, Nien-Ling Wacker, after her realization that businesses needed an easy way to access documents digitally. “She really had a vision to transform the way the world works,” Wacker said. Nien-Ling Wacker died from breast



Laserfiche CEO Chris Wacker speaks to dozens of people during the grand opening celebration of the firm’s new headquarters near the corner of Long Beach Boulevard and Wardlow Road, a short walk from its old building.



Peter Wayman, son of Laserfiche founder Nien-Ling Wacker, watches as his son Winston, 1, splashes in the koi pond inside the tech firm’s new Bixby Knolls headquarters.

cancer in October 2014, and Chris Wacker then took the reins as CEO. “Her vision is manifested in this building,” he said, “and it’s alive in our employees and customers around the world who do incredible things with our technology.”

Representatives for one of those customers—the city of Long Beach—were, for their part, pleased with the new addition to Bixby Knolls. “Long Beach is so proud,” Mayor Robert Garcia said, “of our entire Laserfiche team.” ■



Laserfiche employees work in the company’s new Bixby Knolls headquarters.



A visitor takes a picture of the view from the fourth floor of the new Laserfiche headquarters in Bixby Knolls, which overlooks the 405 Freeway and Downtown.



Elected officials and Laserfiche leadership and staff celebrate the grand opening of the firm’s new Bixby Knolls headquarters with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Restaurant Closures

Continued from page 9

machine because they said it tested for no bleach. I don’t use bleach. We use multi-quat sanitizers. I said, ‘Can you test it for multi-quat?’, and they said no and just wrote up, ‘Major violations observed.’” Navarro said he tries to reason with inspectors, but they’re rarely in the mood to negotiate. “Their job should be to reprimand, make recommendations, not close a business down and put people out of work again.”

According to the Health Department’s Rice-Epstein, inspectors conducted 83 routine inspections from March 1 to March 29, with 30 follow-up

inspections. During that period, she said, six restaurants were temporarily closed—about 7% of those inspected, all for vermin. Further, she said, a third of the places inspected were visited following a customer complaint from someone who personally witnessed the vermin. Real or perceived aggressiveness of the health and code enforcement offices is a topic that’s discussed in both the Downtown and Bixby Knolls areas. Adding to the woes of Downtown restaurateurs is the COVID-19 byproduct of fewer people going to work in area offices, coupled with the noise and debris of incessant construction around Downtown. In an attempt to cool things off between merchants and the city, Bixby Knolls Business

Improvement Executive Director Blair Cohn has been serving as a liaison between the city and business owners in his district. “Health has a job to do. We understand. We’re not trying to get in the way. But can we change the tone a bit?” he said. “You’re on your last nerve, and then the pandemic hits, and then it comes back again, and you’re trying to feed your family, and you’re set back on your heels again. We acknowledge the problem, but it’s not back to normal. People still have trauma feeling the pressure.” Cohn said he has been in talks with the city, including with City Manager Tom Modica. The city manager said in an interview that he’s had conversations with Cohn as well as representatives from other

business districts in the city and acknowledged that there are sometimes perhaps better ways to deal with code enforcement and health inspections, but, he said, “It’s a balance, and health and safety has to come first.” Cohn said, speaking about code enforcement and health inspections: “We have to find a nicer way to deal with those going through the COVID trauma. A business is not a building. It’s people, and the majority here are mom-and-pops trying to make a living and put food on the table, not trying to bypass public safety. It’s just someone who’s gone through so much. We just need to have a gentler way of handling the problem and try to figure out the best way to do it rather than just saying, ‘Here’s the code book.’ People need some breathing room.” ■

Health Department to consider equity for COVID-19 grants

By Crystal Niebla

The Long Beach Health and Human Services Department is revamping its process for distributing COVID-19 recovery grants with an eye toward equity. While the Health Department has already issued about \$6 million in federal CARES Act funds to community organizations and other partners, the agency announced last month that it has now developed an “equity investment framework” that will bring an equity lens to awarding grants through the Long Beach Recovery Act moving forward. The Long Beach Recovery Act is the plan the City Council adopted

last year for spending COVID-19 recovery funds from the federal and state governments. Under this new framework, Long Beach Health Department Director Kelly Colopy said her team will now prioritize awarding money to grassroots organizations that are working in communities that have been the most affected by the pandemic. The Health Department’s data has shown that there is an over-representation of COVID-19 hospitalizations and deaths among those living in poverty and overcrowded conditions, among Black, Latino and Native Pacific Islanders, and among those who were unvaccinated. The department’s data

has also shown that nearly two-thirds of those hospitalized had diabetes or hypertension as an underlying health condition, according to city officials. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders in Long Beach, for example, were seven times more likely to die and nine times more likely to be hospitalized for COVID-19 than White residents. Black Americans have also been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. But the impacts don’t end there. The pandemic has also exacerbated food insecurity, mental health issues, trauma, violence, income loss, chronic illness, grief and isolation. And in the meantime, community members have stepped up to help,

such as by introducing more urban farming and food distributions or increasing food access. The Health Department will look to fund organizations doing that type of work. Colopy said the department will focus on both addressing the impacts of the pandemic and preventing those negative outcomes from happening in the first place. Colopy acknowledged that there are many organizations in the city that regularly apply for grants, so the department also wants to increase its outreach to organizations that are less experienced and provide technical assistance through an external partner that will help both with the application process

LBCC opens new kinesiology labs, aquatic center



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
Swimmers dive into the new swimming pool at Long Beach City College's Liberal Arts Campus, which is part of the new \$75 million kinesiology and athletics facilities.

By Christian May-Suzuki

Long Beach City College has unveiled the latest addition to its campus. Earlier this month, the college announced the opening of its new \$75 million kinesiology labs and aquatic center at the school's Liberal Arts Campus. The aquatic center also officially took on a new name: the Monte Nitzkowski Aquatic Center, in honor of LBCC's former swimming and water polo coach. Nitzkowski, who died in 2016, was an Olympic swimmer who led the Vikings to six state championships in water polo and six state championships in swimming during his tenure from 1955 to 1989. Now, the legendary coach's

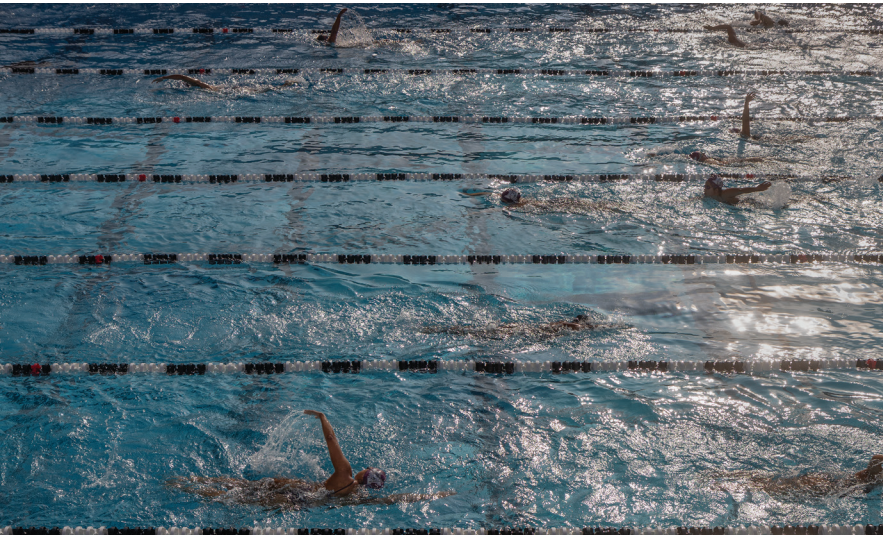
name is attached to the new 30,000-square-foot center, complete with an Olympic-size swimming pool alongside new artificial turf soccer and softball fields, as well as new tennis courts and beach sand volleyball courts across over 18 total acres of construction. "What top-level student athlete wouldn't want to learn, practice and compete here?" President and Superintendent of LBCC Mike Muñoz said during the April 1 ceremony. Support facilities ranging from locker rooms to ice bath machines and new gym equipment will take up about 12,000 square feet of space at the new center. After breaking ground in the fall of 2019 and starting construction soon after, the process moved smoothly despite the COVID-19 pandemic,

according to LBCC Board of Trustees President Uduak-Joe Ntuk. "It was completed right on schedule and ready for the return of our spring semester this year," Ntuk said. Aquatics coach Chris Oeding, who is also an assistant coach for the U.S. Women's Water Polo team, said the facilities are a much-needed breath of fresh air for his athletes. "This is surreal," Oeding said. "It's a beautiful day for our past, our present, and our future student athletes, because they have a new home. And what a home it is." While academics are the central focus for any college, LBCC officials said they understand the important role that athletics can play in a student's growth. "Athletics is an important part of the total college experience, and

athletic events provide students an opportunity to develop valuable skills," Muñoz said, "such as teamwork, self discipline, problem solving, and leadership that can be useful in everyday life." College officials also hope that others will take notice of the new facilities—particularly folks associated with some of the major international events that will soon stop in Southern California. "We are keeping our fingers crossed that when the Olympics come and when the World Cup comes, this is somewhere that those athletes from around the world can come and practice and be ready for competition," Ntuk said. The voter-approved bond measures E in 2008 and LB in 2016 helped fund the construction, and college officials acknowledged their importance during the ceremony. "We simply could not have done it without them," Ntuk said of the city's voters. "Because of their 'yes,' we've been able to make significant progress toward modernizing the college." The bond money has driven a wave of new construction at the college, this project being one of them. "We completed some important infrastructure at both campuses," Ntuk said. "All of those celebrations have been virtual, so we are especially pleased to be with you in person today." Renovations to the auditorium at the Liberal Arts Campus were completed in 2020, a new three-story multi-disciplinary building is scheduled to open this year, and plans are in the works for the modernization of the school's Construction Trades facilities at the Pacific Coast Campus, among other projects. Campus officials hope that these new facilities will help burnish the college's reputation. "With our equitable and consistent academic success rates and improved facilities at both campuses," Muñoz said, "there's just no better learning and living environment than here at LBCC." ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
Beach volleyball players practice on new sand courts at Long Beach City College's Liberal Arts Campus.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
The sun glimmers off Long Beach City College's new swimming pool as student athletes practice.

City to take license away from man accused of running illegal cannabis delivery business



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal
A building on the 200 block of Atlantic Avenue is covered with a black tarp. The building was used as an illegal cannabis delivery hub, according to city officials.

The business owner has denied operating any illegal business.

By Jason Ruiz

A Downtown Long Beach businessman was stripped of his license to operate out of a building in East Village after the City Council voted unanimously earlier this month to uphold findings that he had been operating an illegal cannabis delivery business. The business owner, Jorge Larios, denied that he was operating any illegal business at his office building located at 216 Atlantic Ave. During the April 5 meeting, he maintained that the vans filled with cannabis products that city officials said were proof of his illegal operation were part of his legal statewide delivery business that he has a permit to run in the city of Davis. However, city officials and two hearing officers contended that the vans on Larios' property were not full, but being filled, when business license inspectors came to

his property in December 2020 to perform an inspection. "I didn't deny the fact that the vans were there, but I do have a state license," Larios said. Deputy City Attorney Art Sanchez said that while cannabis delivery is allowed in the city, operation from within the city's boundaries is currently limited to the 32 active dispensaries in Long Beach. Cannabis deliveries are allowed into Long Beach from other cities, but the city maintains that it can control who gets to deliver from within the city. Sanchez said that rule could be changing soon as the City Council will consider opening up delivery licenses as part of its efforts to increase the number of cannabis equity owners in the city in the coming months. But until then, delivery services like the one the city said Larios was operating are illegal. The council's vote ends a months-long process of hearings and appeals to strip Larios of his business license to operate in the city. Larios has previously said he would consider fighting the city's actions in court if the council voted to uphold the hearing officer's decision. ■

2ND & PCH shopping center to welcome 4 more businesses by end of year

By Christian May-Suzuki


Four more businesses are coming to the 2ND & PCH shopping center in southeast Long Beach. The property management company CenterCal announced earlier this month that a group of new bars and restaurants is slated to open at the development by the end of the year: • Beachwood Brewing, which also has a Long Beach location at 210 E. Third St., will open a tasting room with an extended outdoor patio. • dan modern chinese, a restaurant providing a "modern take on traditional Chinese cuisine" with five other Los Angeles County locations, offers handmade dumplings and noodles, wok-fried rice and other delicacies. • Fire Wings, a chain with several locations across California and in Nevada, Colorado and Texas, pairs a menu of over 20 wing flavors with beer. • JINYA Ramen Bar, an international chain founded in Tokyo, is known for its traditional 20-hour preparation of ramen, including the simmering of the broth in pork bones. The shopping center has also welcomed six other tenants in the last six months: Active Culture Cafe, elfin los angeles, GritCycle, Madison Reed Hair Color Bar, Potato Chips Deli and UNTUCKit. For a complete list of tenants and other information on the 2nd & PCH shopping center, visit 2ndandpch.com. ■



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COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

A historic showcase Bluff Heights home coming to market for \$2M

This massive Tudor-Craftsman hybrid mansion has stood in Bluff Heights since the early days of the 1900s, when it was the largest structure around, standing fairly alone in the developing Alamitos Beach Townsite at Eliot Street (now Third Street) and Ojai Avenue (now Orizaba).

It was designed in the Tudor Revival style by LA architect Arthur B. Benton for his sister Olive and her husband Charles E. Espey, a wealthy landowner and developer. And right off the bat the home has historical significance, because Benton was a highly praised architect who was born in Peoria, Illinois, in 1858 and moved to Los Angeles, where he lived and worked until his death at 69 in 1927. Much of Benton's work has been destroyed in the intervening years—including the old Long Beach Downtown YMCA and an early, nautically-themed Ebell clubhouse that was built on the beach at the foot of Daisy Avenue in 1905—but some of his more famous achievements still stand, including the Mission Inn in Riverside. He also did restoration work on many California missions, including San Juan Capistrano and San Diego.

Espey, the original owner, had built his wealth buying and developing land in the area and enjoyed his place as a respectable businessman. But his fall from prominence in Long Beach was sudden and precipitous, when a two-month investigation by Long Beach police resulted in a sweep of an alleged “social vagrant clan” called the 606 that involved some 30 merchants and ministers in the city who met weekly to dress up in women’s wigs, kimonos, silk underwear and stockings and engage in “orgies,” attended by at least 50 men at each meeting.

The arrests were soft-pedaled in the Long Beach newspapers, but the LA Times almost gleefully reported the affair in detail.

Espey, for his part, was eventually found not guilty, but the reportage in the Times was plenty enough to doom his standing in the community. Espey sued the Times for libel, but lost the case and he disappeared from the scene rather rapidly. At any rate, he lived a long life, dying in 1957 at the age of 87. He is buried in the Long Beach Municipal Cemetery.

The home has, over the past 120 years, been fiddled with quite a bit. For many years it was configured as a duplex with just one bathroom on each floor.

Another wealthy developer and real estate salesman, W. Patton Wilson, bought the house in 1918 and made several changes by hiring the prominent Long Beach architect Harvey Lochridge, whose major works include the five-story Markwell Building on Ocean Boulevard and Pine Avenue in 1919 and the addition of three more stories to the building after oilman A.T. Jergins bought it and renamed it the Jergins Trust Building in 1929. Lochridge also designed the Middoughs’ Men’s Shop on Broadway, which later became the Insurance Exchange Building and, with partner Horace Austin, designed the city’s second City Hall in 1923.

Lochridge remodeled the house, adding Craftsman touches, and he rented and lived on the second and third floors with his wife and children.

The house has had other owners throughout the years, but the most significant of all are its current ones, partners Mike Norton and Chris Myint, who bought the then-fairly dilapidated residence in 2004 for \$625,000 and attacked it with a vengeance, throwing another half-million dollars in accomplishing a thorough and well thought-out restoration—actually, more than a restoration but rather a complete overhaul and vast improvement.

All of the wood in the house had been painted, and Norton and Myint hired a furniture company to come in and restore all the wood to its rich and dark natural finish. Walls were torn down, walls were built up, doors were removed or relocated—the place is packed with doors: There are 48 of them in the house, including six exterior doors (there used to be more, but the couple removed one of the front doors because, as Norton explained, “when we ordered pizza the delivery person didn’t know which door to go to”), as well as 78 windows, which are all of different sizes and configurations depending on which room you’re in.

They finished the third floor (which you may call an attic at your peril) and installed central air and heating. They scoured eBay and other sites on the internet, racked up hundreds of miles visiting salvage yards looking for furnishings, wood, lighting fixtures and whatever else struck their fancy. They drove to Dallas to pick up a sofa they liked, and, with help from architect Greg Lamb, added three bathrooms, to bring the total to five.

Aside from a modern refrigerator and showers, the house is a loyal period piece with all manner of curious niches, including a little telephone room in which a previous owner scrawled phone numbers on the wall in pencil.

Norton and Myint’s work on the house, which they named the Pleasant View Manor (the original area upon which the house was built was called the Pleasant View Tract), was honored with an award from Long Beach Heritage in 2007 and has been featured on several home tours. “Thousands of people have paid money to see this house,” said Norton proudly as he led me and photographer Thomas Cordova on an admission-free tour of the residence.

The home, likely built in 1901 (though there are varying opinions) now has six bedrooms and five bathrooms over 3,173 square feet. It is in perfect condition, including new plumbing, new electrical and other upgrades.

Norton, a Realtor, has listed the home at a price of just a few dollars shy of \$2 million, which is an absolutely fair figure for this significant and beautifully renovated and restored home. Norton and Myint also hope the home’s buyer will want to purchase some of the furnishings of the house, which includes Victorian and Edwardian-era furniture, a Jacobean Tudor mahogany dining room table and a piano which has been in the home’s music parlor for generations. ■



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal
A three-story house for sale that was built in the early 1900s in the Bluff Heights neighborhood.



Wikipedia Commons photo
Arthur B. Benton-designed Mission Inn in Riverside.



Courtesy of Mike Norton
The dining room at 302 Orizaba Ave.



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal
The music parlor from the living room in a house that was built in the early 1900s in the Bluff Heights neighborhood.

City denies permit for Sprint Nationals speedboat race after fatal crash last year



Stephen Carr / Business Journal
Paul Metha, left, Tim Hoffman, center, and Gary Koeller speed across the water during the 2019 ARP Long Beach Sprint Nationals at Marine Stadium.

By Jason Ruiz

An investigation following a fatal crash during last year’s Sprint Nationals speedboat race in Long Beach found that the current configuration of the race and other protocols created an unsafe environment for drivers and spectators, leading the city to deny a permit for this year’s race that was scheduled for the weekend of Aug. 6 at Marine Stadium.

The rock-lined straightaway of Marine Stadium, sandwiched between Colorado Lagoon and Naples Island, has been home to the race for decades. However, the race has been marred by the deaths of two drivers since 2018. After a driver was ejected from his boat and died after the August 2021 race, the city launched an investigation, which found that the lapping of waves off the rocks and back into the path of travel, among other things, was creating unsafe racing conditions.

The 2021 crash was caused by a high rate of speed and the wake caused by the boats being directed back into the path of the boats by the narrow stadium, which caused the driver to lose control and collide with another racer before being ejected at over 110 miles per hour, according to a city investigation.

A memo posted to the city’s website earlier this month said the investigation concluded that speed, proximity to vessels, unstable water conditions and limited ability to steer the boats made it difficult to

avoid the deadly crash last year, and could have contributed to another in 2018.

A letter from City Manager Tom Modica to Ross Wallach, president of the Southern California Speedboat Club, which organizes the race, said the August crash could have been much worse.

boat and stop the accelerator that remained depressed, Modica said.

The boat could have continued toward the swimming area of Mother’s Beach and posed a danger to people swimming in the water or standing on the beach, according to city officials.

Modica said in a text message

“Had the vessel not overturned, it may have continued toward the spectating public with no physical barrier preventing impact.”

- Tom Modica, City Manager

“Based on first-hand public safety personnel accounts and video, the unattended vessel continued at a high rate of speed, only overturning after hitting a wake,” Modica wrote. “Had the vessel not overturned, it may have continued toward the spectating public with no physical barrier preventing impact.”

Modica said the application for this year’s race had been denied, noting that similar circumstances led to the deadly 2018 crash that left another racer dead. While responding to that crash, emergency crews had to board the driver’s

that the organization can appeal the city’s finding, something that would have to happen within 60 days, but it’s unclear if the appeal, or any changes that could satisfy the city’s concern for safety, can be worked out in time for the August race.

Wallach said he’s tried unsuccessfully for months to secure a meeting with the city since the deadly 2021 crash to lay out some of the safety changes the club is proposing to make the 2022 race safer for everyone. These include cutting down the number of boats allowed in each heat from six to

four, banning open cockpit boats from racing against closed cockpit boats and requiring all boats that go over 150 miles per hour to have closed cockpits.

Since the 2018 crash, the race has also extended some barriers alongside the course to better protect spectators and beachgoers and added additional lifeguard boats to patrol the area during the races.

While Wallach acknowledged that drivers know that speedboat racing is an inherently dangerous activity, no member of the public has been hurt or sued the city or the club in his more than 20 years of organizing the race. He denied some of the more serious allegations that the two boat crashes could have endangered race spectators.

“He wasn’t there for either of the incidents,” Wallach said of Modica. “He’s going off some assumptions that I’d like to talk to him about.”

Long Beach is one of seven scheduled races for the Southern California Speedboat Club. The next event scheduled by the club is slated for the weekend of Sept. 24 in Bakersfield.

Long Beach denied the race’s application in its current configuration and specified safety requirements, which leaves open the possibility that the city and race organizers can strike a compromise on how to create safer conditions for the event.

“Should the event organizer appeal this decision and present an alternative proposed plan for the City to review, there is a possibility the event could take place again,” Jennifer De Prez, a spokesperson for the City Manager’s Office, said. “However, the City can only speak to what is submitted for our review and cannot speculate as to whether or not a hypothetical alternative proposed plan would be accepted by the City.”

After the 2018 crash, the city had initially denied the race’s application to hold the 2019 race in Long Beach. However, race organizers were able to get approval after they agreed to increase the race’s insurance policy from \$1 million to \$10 million.

Wallach said the club planned to file an appeal, but he also said that the future of the race could rely on the city’s willingness to come to the table.

“If you’re asking me to put odds on it, I won’t, because I don’t know,” Wallach said of the race’s future in Long Beach. “If the city operates as it has for the past nine months then I’m not optimistic. If they’re open to a fair process, then yes, I believe we can come up with a solution.” ■

Belmont Shore Starbucks seeks unionization

By Crystal Niebla

Employees at a Starbucks in Belmont Store submitted a petition to seek unionization earlier this month, joining two other local stores—one in Long Beach and one in Lakewood—in the nationwide movement.

After months of organizing and an in-person meeting with Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz on April 8 in which Long Beach employees (which the company refers to as “partners”) said they felt disrespected, workers at the 5251 Second St. location wrote in an April 11 statement that “the conditions we have been working under and the unfair labor practices we have seen in the past year has opened our eyes to the value in forming a union.”

A Starbucks company spokesperson did not respond to requests for comment.

In a statement on April 10, Schultz

wrote that his company plans “to move forward constructively with all Starbucks partners. However, we must not be distracted by the different vision being put forward by union organizers at some Starbucks stores.”

He wrote that while not all the partners supporting unionization are “colluding with outside union forces, the critical point is that I do not believe conflict, division and dissension—which has been a focus of union organizing—benefits Starbucks or our partners.”

As of earlier this month, 200 stores across the country have filed petitions with the National Labor Relations Board. That includes the Starbucks locations at 3390 E. Seventh St. in Long Beach and 4833 Candlewood St. in Lakewood, which announced their intent to unionize last month.

Schultz, who returned to Starbucks as chief executive officer on April 4, met with partners

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Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Liberation Brewing Company in Bixby Knolls is set to close April 30.

Liberation Brewing to close after 4 years in Bixby Knolls

By Brandon Richardson

Almost four years to the day after opening, Liberation Brewing Company in Bixby Knolls is set to close April 30 due to the pandemic’s months-long stranglehold on the business, the owners have announced.

The brewery, the brainchild of former Reel Big Fish trombonist Dan Regan, had a soft opening on April 19, 2018, and celebrated its grand opening less than two weeks later on May 3. Since then, the taproom has served the community cold beer and been a hub for political conversations and community events.

“We’re pretty shell-shocked right now,” Regan said.

About one and a half years after opening, Regan said the brewery had its first profitable month. The owners had partnered with Nashville hot chicken gurus Fire Bird to set up shop inside Liberation as a “cohabitating domestic life partner,” and everything was falling into place.

“We finally sort of dialed in the events and the formula,” Regan said. “We really saw everything clicking those three months before COVID.”

Early in the pandemic, the chicken-beer partnership was extremely beneficial because having a permanent food vendor and the proper license allowed the brewery to reopen sooner than many other businesses, Regan said.

In September 2021, however, the hot chicken vendor closed up shop, leaving Liberation to cover the sizable monthly rent for the 4,800-square-foot building on Atlantic Avenue. Though operating, the toll from the pandemic

continued to worsen.

“We kept rolling as long as we could, but the writing was on the wall months ago,” Regan said. “It’s sobering.”

While the closure of their first brewing business has been a tremendous blow, the entrepreneurs say they have some “irons in the fire,” which could see Liberation live on in another form. Working with a developer to take up residence on the ground floor of a mixed-use building is one option, Regan said, or seeking other partners to build out a new space.

Beer production stopped a few weeks ago, Regan said, and the brewery should have plenty of stock to carry them through the end—and then some. The group is looking into changing its Alcoholic Beverage Control license to allow for the sale of its bottled beer at bottle shops, farmers markets and festivals.

If the beer taps out, Regan said there is always the option of contracting with another local brewery to produce big, single runs for Liberation.

Whatever the future holds for Liberation, Regan said the goal is to remain in the Long Beach area, where he and the rest of the team lives. Over the past four years, Liberation owners—Regan, Michael Clements and Eric McLaughlin—solidified themselves as being community-centric, hosting local events such as Beer & Politics discussions, concerts, dinners, community meetings and more.

“We tried to focus on local issues with regular people,” Regan said, adding that Long Beach’s beer scene is as diverse as its residents. “That’s why we wanted to set up a brewery here.” ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

A man walks out of Bored & Hungry, a pop-up burger joint that uses the owner’s “Bored Ape” NFT as its branding.

COVID-19 Grants

Continued from page 13

and with the implementation of community projects.

The timing of this new framework stems from the Racial Equity and Reconciliation Initiative, city officials said. This framework strengthens and aligns with one of the goals of the initiative, which is to “improve health and wellness in the City by eliminating social and economic disparities in the communities most impacted by racism.”

To that end, the city also earlier this month opened a new health equity center in North Long Beach. The center will be another way for the Health Department to bring resources to the public, especially youth and families.

As for the new framework, the Health Department launched its first informational meeting late last month, and a follow-up meeting will be planned in person in the near future, officials said.

Future Long Beach Recovery Act allocations for health equity that will be subject to the new equity framework include \$2.8 million for the city’s Health Equity Fund, \$400,000 for immigrant support services and \$3.8 million for addressing health disparities, Health Department spokeswoman Jennifer Rice Epstein said in an email.

To find grants and other funding opportunities that are live now or will become available in the future, visit longbeach.gov/recovery. ■

Long Beach Forward gains new status as incorporated nonprofit organization

By Laura Anaya-Morga

For the past 12 years, the community advocacy group Long Beach Forward has been at the forefront of championing progressive causes like economic and racial equity, language access, and renters’ rights in the city.

This month, the organization started a new chapter: For the first time, as of April 1, the group now runs independently as an incorporated 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Before the change in status, the group depended on other organizations for funding and administrative services. Most recently, the Los Angeles-based Community Partners served as Long Beach Forward’s fiscal sponsor.

Under the new structure, Long Beach Forward will continue its long-held mission to empower low-income residents and people of color and “make a long lasting impact on growing health and equity needs that will continue to impact generations to come,” according to a press release.

The change allows the organization to have full control over its finances and allows its efforts in the city, such as distributing emergency grants and relief for families who experienced hardship during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, to run more efficiently.

“We’ll be able to do that much more

simply, and much more streamlined now that we are in control,” Executive Director James Suazo said.

Long Beach Forward began in 2010 as the “hub” organization for the The California Endowment’s 10-year Building Healthy Communities initiative, a \$1 billion program to transform 14 California communities that were impacted by health inequities. Long Beach was chosen as one of the sites because of the inequities that existed in Central and West Long Beach, said Suazo.

From 2010 to 2012 the organization was fiscally sponsored by the California Conference for Equality and Justice, and Community Partners has sponsored it ever since. The current iteration of the group dates back to 2018, when it rebranded as Long Beach Forward to continue its work beyond the BHCLB initiative and began accepting support and donations from the community.

The effort to become independent, though, began three years ago, when the previous executive director Christine Petit laid out a plan to break away from the fiscal sponsor model. After almost 10 years of program stability, the group had gathered enough resources from the state, sponsors and individual community supporters to run on its own as a nonprofit organization.

The change was put on pause in 2020 due to the pandemic,

but the group still used that time to prioritize the needs of communities in Long Beach that were disproportionately affected by COVID-19, Suazo said.

Long Beach Forward is now funded by over 300 individual donors, according to Suazo, as well as key foundations like the California Endowment and First 5 LA, among others. This funding will continue as the group becomes fully incorporated and takes on additional costs, such as those for accounting and human resources.

“We will never have all the money and financial resources that our opponents within the hotel lobby or the real estate lobby or the oil lobby will have,” he said. “But we have people power.”

Long Beach Forward is currently planning for its annual People’s State of the City on April 28, where community groups will come together to discuss the issues impacting the city’s most vulnerable.

“My biggest hope for Long Beach Forward now that we’re moving into this next era of our organizational life, is for us to really be able to build new pathways for community members and community leaders, regardless of your age, your race, ethnicity, income, sexual orientation, disabilities,” Suazo said, “to be able to really drive real social change within the city.” ■

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CITY OF LONG BEACH BID OPPORTUNITIES

TITLE	BID NUMBER	DUE DATE
Marine Treated Lumber (Re-Issue)	ITB PR22-030	04/20/2022
Propane Gas	RFQ	04/20/2022
Furnish, Deliver, & Install ICP with Single Quadropole MS Systems	WD-43-22	04/21/2022
As-Needed Professional Land Surveying Svcs. for Public Works	RFQ PW22-012	04/21/2022
Beach Restroom Door Replacement And Installation	ITB PR22-032	04/21/2022
LADWP Haynes Generating Station Recycled Water Pipeline Project	REO-0213	04/22/2022
Queen Mary Lifeboat Disposition	RFP ED22-031	04/25/2022
Employee Assistance Program	RFP HR22-037	04/26/2022
Critical Incident Support and Counseling Services	RFP HR22-038	04/26/2022
GWTP HVAC Replacement Project	EO-3500	04/26/2022
Pet Food for Animal Care Services	ITB PR22-040	04/28/2022
LBRA Park Cleaning, Litter Abatement, & Special Collections	RFP PR22-024	04/28/2022
Drilling of Water Wells Alamitos Wells 9A & Alamitos 14 (O-0749)	WD-07-22	04/28/2022

To receive notifications of bid opportunities, register with the City of Long Beach at www.longbeach.gov/purchasing. Additional details on upcoming bids and how to register can be found on the website.

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Registration & Viewing Hours:
8:00 A.M. – 9:50 A.M.

[http://www.longbeach.gov/autoauction](https://www.longbeach.gov/autoauction)

Starbucks

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around the U.S. and China earlier this month for “collaboration sessions” with the intention to “get underneath the challenges in the company that need to be addressed.”

During a meeting between employees and management inside a conference room at the Pacific Gateway building near the Long Beach Airport, Belmont Shore store employee Madison “Mads” Hall, who uses they/ them pronouns, said that Schultz spoke to them in a “very condescending” tone and manner after they brought up union-related issues.

“I felt very disrespected,” Hall said. They said Schultz repeatedly cut them off during the meeting, which Hall posted on social media.

About 20 Starbucks employees from several stores in the Long Beach area first watched a recorded speech by Schultz, who expressed disapproval of unions.

Starbucks is “being assaulted in many ways by the threat of unionization,” Schultz said in the video. After the hour-long screening, Schultz appeared in-person and spoke with employees.

“It was supposed to be an opportunity for us to have a voice,” Hall said. “But the second he walked in, it was very clear that there was a huge power dynamic.”

The meeting confirmed to Hall that their store should move forward with filing. “What are we waiting



Customers holding drinks cross Covina Avenue after leaving Starbucks in Belmont Shore.

Crystal Niebla / Business Journal

for?” they recalled asking themself.

Josie Serrano, a partner from the Seventh Street and Redondo Avenue store that submitted a petition to unionize last month (whose pronouns are also they/ them), said that they and about 10 other protesters held signs outside of Friday’s meeting. Workers at Serrano’s store and the one in Lakewood—the locations that have already submitted petitions to unionize—were not invited to the

meeting itself.

Serrano expressed that higher-ups might be on edge as more stores seek to unionize and lower level employees continue to question leadership.

“Knowing that they cannot take the heat from a barista just asking questions about their anti-union stances is a lot,” Serrano said. “We’re obviously hitting a nerve with corporate.”

Hall said that the catalyst for them to push for unionization is being

overworked, especially during the holiday season when customers—particularly those arriving on the popular Long Beach Trolley tours—flock to their store.

“We’re basically expected to suffer through it,” Hall said. “You are crying from stress on the floor.” Hall said that they hope to inspire others to demand better working conditions.

“This is bigger than just Starbucks or me.” ■



The entrance of the outside of the second story JP23 restaurant, bar and nightclub at 110 E. Broadway.

Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

City Council refers nightclub dispute to hearing officer

The city contends the venue never obtained a proper license or permit to host live music and has racked up a number of citations and misdemeanors.

By Jason Ruiz

An independent hearing officer will now decide whether a Downtown Long Beach bar can continue operating after the City Council voted last week to refer a dispute over business and entertainment permits between the city and JP23 to a neutral party.

The restaurant and nightclub opened its Long Beach location at the corner of Broadway and Pine Avenue in October after an expensive buildout that was prolonged by the pandemic.

However, the city contends that the venue never obtained a proper business license or entertainment permit to host live music and racked up a number of citations and misdemeanors over the past six months. The bar’s legal representative said that the city has not given the business an adequate opportunity to

acquire those permits.

The final straw appeared to be a three-day event held by the business over Super Bowl weekend, where the city said three concerts were held while the business still hadn’t acquired a permit to host such events. The city issued a notice that the business license was denied in February.

Around the same time that JP23 was readying to open in Long Beach, it ran into a host of issues with its Fullerton location leading that City Council to reduce its hours of operation after months of complaints, and multiple allegations that women had been drugged and assaulted after visiting the bar.

A recommendation for the City Council to refer JP23’s appeal to a neutral hearing officer was on the council’s agenda last week, and supporters and opponents of the bar were in the crowd.

In an unusual move, the council pulled the issue off its consent calendar—a list of issues it typically votes on with a single vote and no discussion—to allow members of the public who showed up to the meeting to speak on the matter.

Stephen Tillet, the executive director of the Orange County-based nonprofit Effort Love Action & Determination (ELAD), said he’s known the bar’s owner, Jacob Poozhikala, for a decade and that he’s a difference-maker in the communities where he operates.

“I don’t know what your process is but I do know who this man is and he is exactly the kind of business owner you want in your community,” Tillet said.

Poozhikala told the council that closing the bar would result in over 70 jobs lost in the Downtown area and a personal loss for him from the over \$3 million he said he invested into the space before JP23 opened. He asked for his appeal to be heard before the City Council rather than a hearing officer.

Council members were also flooded with hundreds of emails

and calls leading up to last week’s meeting asking for the city to deny the bar’s permit.

A handful of women spoke against the bar being allowed to remain open. Michelle Castillo, who identified herself as a protector of native land in Long Beach, referenced the allegations against Poozhikala’s Fullerton location and said the same could happen in Long Beach.

“Now they’re coming into the land of my ancestors and the same mess that’s happening in Fullerton is going to happen in the city of Long Beach,” Castillo said.

A planned protest outside of City Hall last week was canceled, with organizers citing Poozhikala’s history of litigation against those who have spoken out against his Fullerton location.

Poozhikala had filed a number of lawsuits in Fullerton over the issues that the location faced, including against the alleged rape victim, who was sued for libel and slander, and a person who emailed a public comment to City Council members referencing the allegation. The city of Fullerton and its Police Department were also sued, according to the Los Angeles Times.

The Times reported in February that the Fullerton City Council voted to reduce the location’s hours of operation after repeated violations witnessed there including exceeding capacity limits and hosting events without an entertainment permit.

Once the hearing officer issues his or her findings, Poozhikala can choose to appeal again if the officer sides with the city, in which case the issue could return to the City Council. The council could vote to uphold the findings or override them with council members’ own suggestions.

Some Long Beach council members, though, expressed concern that a new business could be forced to close so soon after opening.

“One of the things I pride myself in is uplifting businesses that are existing,” said Councilmember Mary Zendeja, who represents the Downtown area. ■

Clean Truck Fee

Continued from page 10

requirements for the low-NOx exemption, and the two ports sunset their low-NOx exemptions at different times.

For the Port of Long Beach, exemptions will last until either Dec. 31, 2034 or Dec. 31, 2037, depending on when the vehicle was purchased and registered with the Port Drayage Truck Registry. The Port of Los Angeles will sunset its exemption on Dec. 31, 2027.

While the fee doesn’t directly affect individual drivers, the Harbor Trucking Association CEO Matt Schrap said that there is a fear that cargo owners will pass the costs down onto drivers.

“It really just depends on the relationship with the [shipment company],” Schrap said over the phone.

To attempt to alleviate this fear from truckers, the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners President Steven Neal said that there is language in the fund that prohibits this from happening, and the Port of

Los Angeles has an anonymous reporting system for truckers to use if the fee is being passed onto them.

“The truckers will not pay this fee,” Neal said.

The association’s other major concern revolves around infrastructure—particularly the challenge of acquiring and charging these types of trucks.

“If we don’t have adequate charging stations, these [vehicles] will turn into glorified yard art,” Schrap said.

An overview of the Clean Truck Fund rate program, meanwhile, says that technology assessments will be conducted as needed, and the ports will “collaborate with government agencies as well as private entities” to evaluate the need for new infrastructure.

“We recognize that zero-emissions vehicles need a support structure, that’s why the Clean Truck Fund spending plan is designed to devote a substantial portion of the initial monies towards that infrastructure,” Port of Long Beach Director of Environmental Planning Matt Arms said by email. “We’re working with our leadership to seek state and federal funding for support



Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia, right, and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti talk next to Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka, left, and Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero at a press conference in the Port of Long Beach to launch the new Clean Truck Fund rate.

Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

infrastructure as well.”

Overall, port officials said they see the implementation of this fee as a critical moment for their sustainability efforts.

“I am confident that we will realize our goals,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said, “and move this industry into a zero-emission future.” ■

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Bored Ape

Continued from page 19

It's not just any crypto art. It's part of the highly popular (and expensive) Bored Ape Yacht Club NFT art series that includes 10,000 distinct digital images, all uniquely numbered, of apathetic-looking cartoon primates.

Orange County-based restaurateur, Andy Nguyen, co-founder of Afters Ice Cream—which you can patron in Long Beach—Black Matte Coffee, the Hello Kitty Café, and a host of other food concepts geared to digital-age generations, recently purchased three Bored Ape NFTs to create his burger pop-up, Bored & Hungry. The most expensive of those was the striped shirt ape #6184 for \$267,000.

Nguyen said his goal behind Bored & Hungry is to demonstrate that the NFTs are more than a fad, that this growing industry carries great and yet untapped potential in physical world business.

"Everyone's so skeptical about it," he said. "I understood the power of IPs (intellectual properties) and using recognizable pop-culture characters and I was like, 'Oh my god, no one is doing this, I'm gonna be the person that strikes.'"

NFTs, or non-fungible tokens, are sophisticated pieces of computer code that designate ownership of something—anything—in the digital space. They could be art, music, videos, even tweets, and are purchased with cryptocurrency, like Bitcoin—except in the case with NFTs, it's usually with a special cryptocurrency known as Ethereum.

What's generating the most excitement around NFTs, though, is how that intricate computer code (also known as a blockchain) is being used to sell digital art. And the Bored Ape Yacht Club alone generated over \$1 billion in sales in 2021.

There's also a dizzying amount



Bored & Hungry, a pop-up burger joint that uses the owner's "Bored Ape" NFT as its branding, recently opened on the corner of Seventh Street and Junipero Avenue.

of hype around the art that's attracting buyers beyond eclectic art collectors and crypto enthusiasts. Celebrities such as Paris Hilton, Jimmy Fallon and Tim Curry own some of the digital apes. And people are dropping huge sums of cash to buy in: Eminem bought his early this year for over \$450,000. As of earlier this month, the most expensive Bored Ape Yacht Club NFT ever sold was #3749 for \$2.9 million.

Because Bored Ape NFT owners are awarded rights to employ the ape images for commercial use—though not all NFTs share that permission—Nguyen will be using his apes (the other two he purchased are less expensive "mutant apes") as the brand's logo,

including the food packaging art and other merchandise such as T-shirts and hats.

The burgers to be wrapped in the ape-clad packaging are a collaboration with two of Nguyen's other restaurant concepts: Trill Burgers, a smashburger concept created in partnership with Houston rapper, Bun B, and Beleaf Burgers, a plant-based fast-food restaurant in Chino. Some might have had a taste of the two concepts blended into one at ComplexCon in Long Beach in November, when the restaurants teamed up to present a vegan smashburger.

But in addition to showing the world that NFTs can make for a viable physical world business, Nguyen is also hoping to change some of the stigma surrounding NFTs.

"When people mention the word 'NFT,'" Nguyen said, "it's either, 'Oh you're in the NFT world?' or 'Oh,' like in a negative way. I'm here to help bridge that gap of painting it in a positive light for both worlds."

NFTs are polarizing. Critics say they're frivolous and harmful to the environment because of the energy consumption required to make one, while enthusiasts view it as a way of putting creative agency back into the hands of digital artists. Before NFTs, digital artists struggled to retain ownership of their art online because anyone with a computer can download an image once it's on the web.

That's not to say NFTs eradicate this problem. NFTs are digital art and anyone can download them, which is why many people think the concept is pointless. What's unique is that the tech gives the art a sort

of certificate of authenticity, like the physical world uses to verify sculptures or paintings as genuine. This has never been possible for digital artists in the past.

But what the NFT tech also does is allow the artist to publicly track every single transaction after the initial sale through the blockchain, allowing for perpetual royalty payback, even though not all NFTs include royalties after the first sale.

Nguyen is the type of investor who said he is always on the hunt for the next idea that could hit big, much like Afters Ice Cream did. Despite all the hype, Nguyen admits that he wasn't quite sold on the NFT craze early on.

"This last November is when I finally started taking the time to learn about it and it kind of opened my eyes, like, 'Oh my god, the possibilities are endless in this field,'" he said. "It's more than just a jpeg. There's digital ownership and you're building community. You can build brands around it. There's so much that hasn't been done yet."

It's the Bored Ape community that Nguyen is also banking on to propel the pop-up forward and into other spaces across the Southland. And not just other Bored Ape NFT owners (though those who show up to the grand opening with proof of authenticity will receive a free meal), but other crypto art fanatics.

Nguyen said he's optimistic about his choice to come to Long Beach.

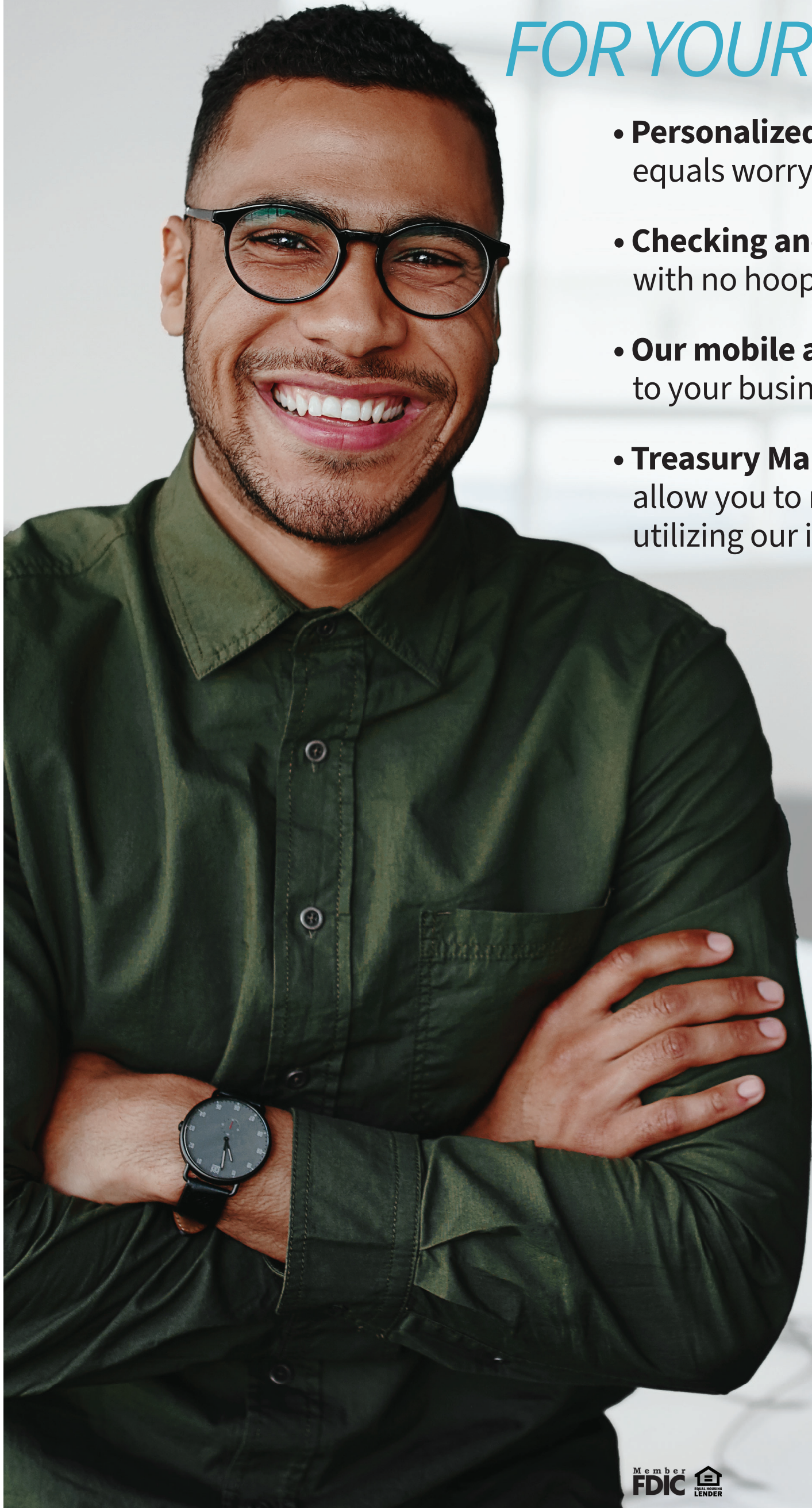
"It's a great city," he said. "Very open-minded, and I think that's why we settled on that location. It's a great, diverse area." ■



Customers wait to place their orders inside Bored & Hungry, the world's first restaurant to use an NFT as its branding.

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