

Long Beach Business Journal

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Gwen Shaffer, a journalism professor at Cal State Long Beach, drinks coffee during a virtual class in her Belmont Shore home Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2022. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

COVID-19 HAS CHANGED HIGHER ED FOR GOOD WITH INCREASED LEVEL OF ONLINE LEARNING

BY BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

When the coronavirus spread to the U.S., millions were forced to stay home from work and school. With little notice, colleges and universities nationwide were forced to shift their learning models to a fully digital space.

The transition, at first, seemed temporary. But as colleges and universities have worked through the challenges to build a system that allows for learning exclusively online, officials now say remote instruction will likely become a permanent fixture of higher education.

The early difficulties that professors and administrators faced in implementing such a major shift, though, were real.

“Pre-pandemic [online] offerings were minimal at best,” Lee Douglas, vice president of academic affairs at Long Beach City College said. “It wasn’t really that widespread.”

The transition to 100% online instruction was challenging for students, Douglas said, as well as educators. “It was, I’ll be very honest, a traumatic experience for many.”

Prior to the pandemic, William Jeynes, a professor of education at Cal State Long Beach, said he assumed his lack of experience with teaching online put him in the minority. However, when the school set up Zoom tutorials for teachers, he quickly realized the vast majority of his colleagues were as new to the format as he was.

Another assumption Jeynes had, “and it turned out to be wrong, is that in terms of technological ability, my students were ahead of me,” he said. “Many of them were, but what surprised me is how many students I had to assist technologically.”

Despite the early challenges, both educators agree there are many benefits to online learning. The primary benefit amid the pandemic, of course, was the ability to continue teaching students during a time of turmoil that kept people physically apart.

Another major benefit of online education is the flexibility provided to both students and teachers, Douglas said. Prior to the pandemic, asynchronous

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LBUSD school workers raise possibility of strike as contract talks remain stalled

BY MIKE GUARDABASCIO / Reporter

The Long Beach Unified School District is still stuck in a protracted impasse with its second-largest employee union, with no end in sight as state mediators prepare to step in later this month.

The 3,000 or so classified employees in the Long Beach chapter of the California School Employees Association range from nutrition workers to bus drivers to custodians and maintenance staff. They’ve been negotiating a new contract with the district for nearly two years, with pay being the main sticking point.

The CSEA Long Beach chapter has never before gone on strike, but the leadership’s frustration was evident at a LBUSD Board of Education meeting late last month, where many of their

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LBUSD students saw drop in test scores last year, reflecting pandemic challenges

BY KELLY PUENTE / Reporter

Long Beach Unified students saw significantly lower test scores in math and English for the 2020-21 school year, highlighting the difficulties in a year of mostly remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The California Department of Education recently released student performance data from 2020-21, giving a snapshot of how students fared in the pandemic for the first time in two years.

Overall, students statewide saw setbacks in standardized tests for math and English, while chronic absenteeism increased and four-year graduation rates decreased. The scores also show widening achievement gaps between

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Education

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The Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum at Cal State Long Beach in Long Beach Monday, Jan 31, 2022. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

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10% of on-campus LBCC students noncompliant with vaccine mandate

BY CHRISTIAN MAY-SUZUKI / Reporter

About 10% of on-campus students at Long Beach City College remain noncompliant with the school's COVID-19 vaccine mandate—and college officials are continuing to encourage vaccinations.

Even with the relatively high compliance rate, though, it appears COVID-19 is still impacting enrollment at the college.

A report presented to the Long Beach Community College District Board of Trustees at its Jan. 26 meeting highlighted that just 1,045 of the 10,131 on-campus students (currently enrolled in in-person or hybrid classes) are out of compliance with the mandate, which required students to provide proof of vaccination or submit a successful exemption request prior to Jan. 24 to remain enrolled in in-person and hybrid classes.

The number is strikingly similar to LBCC employees, who currently maintain an 83% vaccination rate. While a large majority of management (92%), part-time faculty (91%) and full-time faculty (91%) have been vaccinated, other groups like exempt workers (67%) and classified hourly workers (53%) have brought the average for employees down.

The mandate, though, exempts outside vendors and visitors; they are allowed on campus if they show proof of a negative test and will exclusively remain outdoors while on campus.

That exemption was called into question at the board's meeting by Trustee Sunny Zia, who pushed for a vaccine requirement for anyone on campus. Vice President of Business Services Marlene Drinkwine, though, explained some of the nuance behind the decision.

"When we looked at visitors, these could be spectators at outdoor sporting events or commencement exercises," Goodwine explained. "We didn't want to be more strict than what a public health order would be for indoor uses versus outdoor uses."



A masked person walks through the Long Beach City College Liberal Arts Campus Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

The 10% of students who have not fulfilled this requirement are barred from visiting the campus for any reason, including for any on-campus services or events. While many students who had not followed the mandate were immediately dropped from in-person and hybrid classes on Jan. 24, 1,700 students have been able to re-enroll in classes with case management from LBCC.

The case management program began on Jan. 10 for students who were expected to not be in compliance with the mandate, though officials did not expand on how those students were identified. Those students, though, were supported by a "collaboration between counseling, student affairs, enrollment services, student equity, and leadership from (counselor) Dr. Erainia Freeman," Superintendent-President Mike Muñoz said, that helped provide students the knowledge and resources to submit their records and re-enroll or explore options that do not require a COVID-19 vaccination.

LBCC continues to work with students still in violation of the mandate to get them back in classes. The school began its case management program with 2,387 students, and the 1,700 that have re-enrolled after submitting vaccination records represented a significant portion of students in violation of the mandate.

"We're not just dropping them and leaving them alone. We are following up with those students to assure they have educational options at Long Beach City College," the college's Interim Vice President of Student Services Nohel Corral said.

These numbers come as LBCC continues extensive efforts to encourage vaccination, including \$1,000 incentive payments to 2,285 students who met the timeline for the mandate, with an additional 428 students set to receive this incentive. The school has also conducted significant outreach, contacting over 2,800 students via text, email or phone to ensure awareness of the mandate.

The mandate, though, comes as enrollment numbers continue to drop as the pandemic lingers. General enrollment for the winter 2022 session was almost 9% lower than it was the year prior, which has resulted in a low fill rate for classes, particularly those requiring in-person attendance.

Just over 60% of classes requiring in-person attendance were filled for the winter 2022 session, compared to 81% for those conducted in an online-only format. The fill rate for classes overall is about 77%, but that number dipped dramatically from the 87% overall fill rate in winter 2021.

O. "Lee" Douglas, the vice president of academic affairs, said that a glaring reason for these lower numbers was an abnormally high number of dropped classes in the first few weeks of the session.

"I would imagine that some of the drops are in part likely due to the rise of omicron," Douglas said, "which happened to coincide with the first few weeks of our winter session."

While the spring semester of this year has seen only a slight decline in overall enrollment, the fill rates for classes overall show an even greater reluctance to attend classes in person.

Less than 55% of in-person only classes have been filled, and hybrid enrollment has about 64% of its classes filled for spring 2022. However, online-only class enrollment remains steady, sitting at 82.7%.

Douglas noted that enrollment numbers for the spring were improving slightly before the past week, when numbers dipped to lower than average levels. Douglas explained that this drop is directly connected to the cutting of low enrollment classes during that time frame, as well as drops initiated due to lack of compliance with the vaccine mandate.

Another update will be presented to the Board of Trustees at its Feb. 23 meeting. ■

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CSULB to return to Angel Stadium for this year’s in-person commencement

BY FERNANDO HARO / Reporter

Cal State Long Beach officials announced late last month that the university’s graduation ceremony this spring will return to Angel Stadium of Anaheim for the class of 2021 and 2022. Each college will hold its own two-hour ceremony, starting with the College of Engineering on May 16, at 9 a.m. The schedule for the three-day event is as follows:

- College of Engineering – May 16, 9 a.m.
- College of Education – May 16, 1 p.m.
- College of Liberal Arts – May 16, 5 p.m.
- College of the Arts – May 17, 9 a.m.
- College of Natural Sciences & Mathematics – May 17, 1 p.m.
- College of Business – May 17, 5 p.m.
- College of Health & Human Services – May 18, 9 a.m.

Last year, CSULB officials opted to hold graduation for the class of 2020 and 2021 at Angel Stadium to safely accommodate several hundred students at a time in keeping with state health guidelines. School officials said last year’s decision was made after a school-wide survey revealed that by a six-to-one margin, students preferred to have their graduation ceremony in-person. However, students that year were faced with the task of choosing who they wanted to invite to their graduation as CSULB officials gave them a total of two tickets: one for the graduate and one for a guest, the Daily 49er reported. Students were also given two parking passes for the event. CSULB officials later gave students



A graduate walks down to the first level to join his fellow graduates at the commencement for Cal State Long Beach’s College of Engineering classes of 2020 and 2021 at Angel Stadium in Anaheim Friday, May 28, 2021. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

an extra ticket, for a total of three, prompting some students to look to social media to acquire more graduation tickets for family and friends. This year, students that apply for graduation will not require a ticket to attend the event and will instead use a “grad pass” to gain access. Graduates will also receive a minimum of 15 tickets for guests and parking will be

free, according to the CSULB website. More information on tickets and distribution will be available in May, school officials said. Students who wish to have their names added to the Graduate Recognition Program must apply for graduation by March 1. The “popular” Graduate Recognition Stages, where students can create a

personalized slide and quote that appears as they hear their name announced and walk the “mini” stage, will be located in the stadium’s parking lot. The ceremony will also be available through a livestream on the commencement website. For more information, visit the graduation ceremony page on CSULB’s website. ■

Long Beach City College plans to use \$30M gift to advance educational equity

BY CHRISTIAN MAY-SUZUKI / Reporter

A \$30 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott will help Long Beach City College offer a more equitable educational experience for students. College officials spoke at the board’s Jan. 26 meeting about how it plans to use the unrestricted gift, which was one of dozens that Scott doled out to schools across the country last summer. Since the gift was first announced, officials said, the college has created an advisory group that solicited input from the community on how it should be spent—and the message has been that educational equity should be front and center. “We felt that it was very important that when we received this gift, we did not want to have this be seen as being top-down, or that two or three people sat down in a room and came out and said, ‘Hey, this is how this \$30 million is going to be spent,’” Superintendent-President Mike Muñoz told the board. Through that process, three funding priorities came to light:

improving student academic outcomes by addressing racial equity gaps, engaging in race-conscious and equity-minded practices that promote an inclusive and affirming campus environment, and increasing holistic support services for their most vulnerable students. But allowing the money—which is the single largest donation the college has ever received—to be a source of ongoing revenue growth was also important to officials. To that end, Muñoz said, up to \$20 million will be invested for the long term. An investment firm will be chosen by the Board of Trustees following a request for proposals. “This was important to the group because we don’t want to see this gift as an ATM, where you just keep drawing from it, and when it’s gone it’s gone,” Muñoz said. “By investing, you can increase the corpus over time.” Several guidelines have been set to select the right investment firm, including socially responsible investing as well as involving the input of a representative from the advisory group. Investment return metrics have

been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in widely varying projections for annual returns. Currently, the projected return on investment lies anywhere from \$350,000 to \$1.4 million per year. Muñoz said that officials feel comfortable going that route because while the money is unrestricted—meaning the college can use it however it wishes—the gift can only be received once. “They made it clear that you can’t go back to the well,” Muñoz said. The rest of the funds, though, will go directly toward helping students in need. Specifically:

- Up to \$3 million will fund scholarship endowments for students who struggle with basic needs such as food or housing, have been impacted by societal systems like foster care and incarceration or come from certain minority groups.
- Up to \$3 million will go toward Equity Innovation Grants, a new source of funding available to students undertaking projects that “focus on innovation and large-scale change in alignment with equity

funding priorities.”

- Up to \$2 million will fund the Long Beach College Promise program, which offers LBUSD students a tuition-free year at LBCC, as well as a path to admission at CSULB so long as they meet certain requirements.
- Up to \$2 million will be used to invest in “Institutional Priorities.” Muñoz described this as “funds that align with our equity plan with other initiatives that are more global and at the institutional level that support closing equity gaps.”

Board President Uduak-Joe Ntuk expressed support for the recommendations, but suggested that it would be beneficial for the foundation to meet with the board and discuss potential alternatives before coming to their final decision on the allocations. Vice President Herlinda Chico, meanwhile, voiced her trust in the advisory board, saying she is comfortable moving forward with any decision that they made. “The people that were on this [committee] are just incredible,” Chico said, “with so many diverse backgrounds.” ■

Q&A: How a new center at CSULB hopes to address equity in higher education



Rashida Crutchfield

BY HAYLEY MUNGUIA / Editor

The two-year-long COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated so many different types of inequities—and perhaps none have been more consequential than those in education. But in the midst of the public health crisis, Cal State Long Beach kicked off its own effort to address just that issue. The university’s Center for Equitable Higher Education launched over the summer, so I reached out to the center’s director, Rashida Crutchfield, to learn more about the program’s work and how it fits into the current educational landscape. This interview has been edited for length and clarity. **HAYLEY MUNGUIA:** First, can you tell me a little bit about the background of the Center for Equitable Higher Education? How did it get started? **RASHIDA CRUTCHFIELD:** Well, my work and research agenda is exploring basic needs—so food, housing and financial stability for students in higher education. So the CSU, in 2018, published a report that I wrote along with my research partner, Jennifer Maguire, who’s at Humboldt State University. The study explored the prevalence of homelessness and food insecurity for our students, and it has been the basis for a lot of action in the CSU and beyond the CSU to really think about how student success really requires students to not only have the supports they need to do academically well—they also have to be physically and mentally well to progress to graduation. So the Center for Equitable Higher Education is built on those same ideas. It’s focused on promoting food, housing

and financial justice for students in higher education. It’s really our job to make sure that the support services and the policies that have been created are addressing the needs of those students, and particularly the needs of those students who need support the most. The center started in June of 2021, so we’ve been doing the work. We’ve been given seed money from the CSU chancellor’s office to develop the research center and finally were able to lift this off in June. **HM:** Can you tell me a little bit more about what the work looks like? **RC:** We develop and implement mixed method studies, so often that means that we will survey students. So we’ll ask students information through a survey, and we also do qualitative data collection, meaning we do interviews and focus groups with students, and we gather all that information and we disseminate it on the academic side. We also share that information publicly through articles like this and through public papers and also policy briefs that help inform our legislative and also local environment. **HM:** Are there any specific studies you’re working on right now? **RC:** I’m really excited about a study that I’m working on with a group of CSU faculty. Specifically, I’m leading a research study with my colleague Jessica Wolin, who’s at San Francisco State, but we’re also working with faculty in Sacramento and Chico. It’s focused on college-focused rapid rehousing. So two years ago, the California state Legislature invested \$15 million in the CSU to move beyond emergency housing. Almost 11% of CSU students experience homelessness in a year, and so up to this point, a lot of the responses that we were able to have for students were limited to either emergency housing, so if campuses have—and this is for UCs as well as the California Community Colleges—if a campus has campus housing, we might help house a student for a shorter period of time, maybe up to two weeks, and help connect them to other resources so that they could then find housing. For some students, that really helps, but for students who are really, really experiencing homelessness to a critical degree, that’s really not enough. So we’re working with an organization called Jovenes, Inc. They have a college success program, so what we do is we identify students on our campus and refer them to Jovenes, and Jovenes subsidizes that housing and provides case management or wrap-around services. So we house the student for a much longer period of time. That really helps support that student all the way through, so they can be financially self-sufficient and earn

their degree. So right now, the Center for Equitable Higher Education is evaluating that program at eight CSU campuses and two community colleges to see what’s working and what are areas of improvement, how can this be a model if it is working well and how are we making sure the students who need these services are getting them. **HM:** OK. So are you thinking that a lot of the work the center will be doing will focus on evaluating programs that already exist? Or creating new programs and incorporating research on their effectiveness? **RC:** We’re talking about this in the abstract, in some ways, because we just started. So the rapid rehousing research we’re doing is a \$2 million project that is a longitudinal evaluation, so it consumes quite a lot of our energy. Some of the things we’re doing is evaluating programs that already exist. Sometimes when people are developing programs to essentially address problems, often evaluation is not funded. The state gave this money to the CSUs, and our campuses are doing required reporting back to the state, but real evaluation that helps us really understand what’s happening, how is it happening, why does it work, why does it not work—that goes beyond an accountability measure. So right now, we’re looking at existing programs. If and when we have programs that have—well, actually, right now I’m talking to a program, but I don’t want to disclose the name because it’s still early. But I am currently working with a program that’s in development, and so they’ve integrated evaluation as part of their development model, and that’s of course ideal. That’s what we want, but sometimes that doesn’t necessarily happen. **HM:** I’m also interested in the timing of when the center launched. COVID-19 has really exposed the need for a focus on educational equity. But I’m curious what kinds of challenges you’ve come across with launching this during the pandemic? **RC:** Logistically, clearly, it makes things a little bit more challenging. But I think it actually makes this more vital because the COVID pandemic has really exacerbated and escalated students’ financial risk and really challenges a lot of people’s well-being. So in many ways, we are right there at a really prime opportunity to help inform policy and inform decision-making, as we are responding very quickly. The word of the pandemic is “pivot,” so we have been creative in thinking about new ways to respond to students. **HM:** And can you talk a little bit more about how the center is funded? **RC:** We got initial funding from the CSU chancellor’s office to begin the center. Right now, we are very much

funded by public and private foundations that are supporting our work, and we continue to look for new avenues to help. The goal is to be sustainable until our students don’t need us anymore. Ultimately, the goal is for students not to be experiencing these problems anymore. I would love to work my way out of work and see that our students don’t need us to be reporting this data. Until that happens, we’ll continue to get support from foundations, from private donors and seek support from the state. **HM:** Looking forward, what do you hope the Center for Equitable Higher Education will accomplish? **RC:** I definitely see the center as working in tandem with our campus staff, our community-based agencies and our policy makers to ensure that our students are seen, that their voices are heard, that we’re responsive to their needs and that we produce the kinds of supports necessary to make sure that they achieve graduation. I’ve spoken to literally hundreds of students who experience homelessness or are food insecure, and they’re so committed—they’re so dynamically committed to graduate, to earn a degree, to support their families, and they are doing those things, but they’re struggling. They’re bending over so far backwards, and I really think it’s our responsibility in higher education and as community members that we invest in these students. So my hope for our research center is that we can support that vision of making sure every student has what they need to reach the goals they set. **HM:** And is this type of work happening elsewhere? Or is this pretty unique to CSULB? **RC:** Other universities are developing programmatic responses for students, but having this research hub is very unique to us. When I first started doing this work, there were very few people who were focused on basic needs research. Now, there are more—still not enough, but there are more, and working with them through the center helps us to coordinate our efforts. We are definitely a sharing community in the basic needs research world, so we make sure we’re sharing tools. We’re making sure research is valid and reliable—I mean, that’s always something that we would strive for, but clearly in a time where a lot of people are questioning the value of actual data, our coordinated efforts through the center helps make sure that our research is asking the questions that need to be asked, and that we’re learning from each other, and every time a different researcher decides to respond to a different question, that they are fully aware of the field of research that exists so they can grow it and we can learn more. ■

CSEA Strike

Continued from cover page

members rallied outside, carrying signs demanding more livable wages or threatening to walk off the job.

Chapter President Gilbert Bonilla Jr. spoke over the sound of honks and cheers from the parking lot: “LBUSD, give us our raise,” he said. “We appreciate your videos of gratitude but your love doesn’t pay our bills.”

CSEA Chapter Vice President Enrique Chavez spoke as well and used harsher language in addressing the five board members.

“Do you want a walkout or a strike on your record?” he asked.

According to the district’s most recent bargaining update, issued in October, the two sides have been negotiating their new collective bargaining agreement since March of 2020, with more than 100 hours of meeting time. In October, the two sides participated in impasse mediation with a California State Conciliation Service Mediator but could not come to an agreement.

Bonilla said in an interview last month that the two sides are preparing for a Public Employee Relations Board fact-finding session that will take place Feb. 22-23, where both sides will present evidence in support of their proposals.

The biggest issue between the two sides is pay. The district offered the CSEA the same 3% raise it gave the Teachers Association of Long Beach in negotiations last year, but the CSEA wanted what amounts to about 7%, on the ground that an incremental raise means less to employees making minimum wage, which Bonilla said nearly half his members do.

“If a teacher gets 2% and they’re making \$100,000, they’re getting \$2,000,” said Bonilla. “If one of our members is making minimum wage, they’re getting \$240 a year. Cost of living has gone up 5%, and inflation has made it more dramatic. When people say, ‘Why don’t they just take what the teachers took?’ That’s why. The substitutes got a 14% raise, the executive staff got a



Members of the California School Employee Association, Long Beach Chapter 2, rally for a new classified workers contract, outside the Long Beach Unified School District board meeting, at the LBUSD head office Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022. Photo by Stephen Carr.

raise. We’re asking for seven cents on the dollar, and they’re saying no.”

LBUSD instructional aides represented by CSEA also spoke at the Jan. 19 board meeting and shared the difficulty of continuing to live in the city given the rising cost of living.

After public comment had concluded that evening, LBUSD Board President Juan Benitez said, “We cannot comment on those negotiations, just as a matter of public record,” he said. “It’s not that we aren’t responsive or listening, we just can’t comment because of the mediated fact-finding. ... That being said, I also wanted to thank all of our speakers for coming out tonight.”

Bonilla said that the CSEA head office in San Jose has indicated that his chapter should feel optimistic about their chances going in front of the Public

Employee Relations Board. The position of the CSEA, according to Bonilla, is that the district’s large financial reserves should have been spent on staff and services, instead of accumulating as a cushion against future financial issues; the district’s reserves are currently over \$300 million.

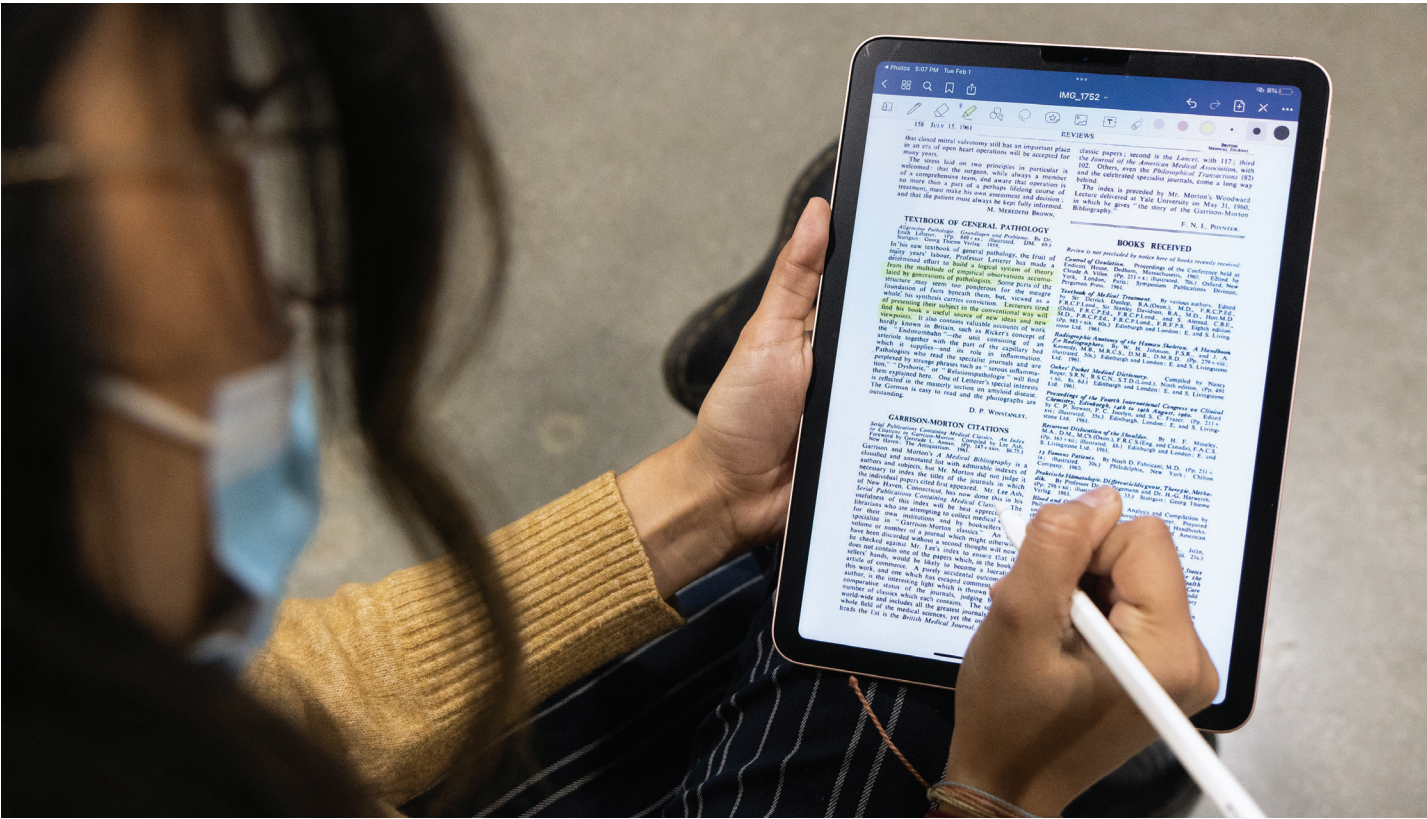
“That money is supposed to be spent on education each year. Those are tax dollars from parents that aren’t being seen in education or support, which includes our members,” said Bonilla. “Instead, a lot of that money went into the piggy bank, and we have members making hard choices on rent and food and medical costs.”

In budget presentations over the last few years, the district has said those reserves will help offset lost revenue due to the steady enrollment decline

of the last several years, a trend that’s expected to continue. The October bargaining update from the LBUSD reads, “While the District recognizes the significant contributions of CSEA during these difficult times, the District is not able to responsibly agree to this offer if it is to remain fiscally solvent in the future.”

With both the CSEA and the LBUSD holding firm on their positions for the last several months, there’s little hope of resolution ahead of the state-led fact-finding session. Bonilla said his membership isn’t going to back down from its demands.

“Our surveys show that the majority of our membership want the raise, and they’re willing to strike,” he said. “We’re getting to that time where it’s critical.” ■



Cal State Long Beach is lending out iPads to students as part of a system-wide initiative to combat the digital divide among students. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

CSULB works to bridge digital divide with free iPads for students

BY BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

Long Beach State kicked off its spring semester late last month by joining a California State University system-wide initiative that aims to bridge the digital divide among students by providing hundreds iPad bundles free of charge.

The initiative’s launch at CSULB comes two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, which has highlighted accessibility issues among students of all ages.

The California State University Connectivity Contributing to Equity and Student Success, or CSUCCESS, offers a free iPad Air, Apple Pencil and Apple Smart Keyboard Folio to all first-year students, including freshman, transfers

and graduate students. Students also can request free Wi-Fi hotspots.

The program does not have an income-based eligibility requirement, but students must submit a request to the university.

“The CSUCCESS program will help ensure our first-year students have the necessary technology to be successful,” Bryon Jackson, assistant vice president of Unified Technology Support and Innovation at CSULB said in a statement. “We have taken many steps to bridge the digital divide during the pandemic and the CSUCCESS program only strengthens the Student Technology Loan program for our students in need.”

Cal State Long Beach had distributed 68 iPads by Feb. 1 and

expected 400 more to arrive by the end of last week, spokesman Gregory Woods said in an email.

The Cal State system is the largest of four-year higher education in the country and the CSUCCESS program has the potential to serve tens of thousands of students. According to university data, Cal State Long Beach—the largest of the state universities by enrollment—admitted just over 4,900 freshman and nearly 5,100 transfer students for fall 2020.

The first phase of the program kicked off in the fall semester with eight schools—Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Fresno, Humboldt, Los Angeles, Maritime Academy, Northridge and San Marcos. Phase two campuses joining



California School Employee Association, Long Beach Chapter 2, President Gilbert Bonilla Jr. plays the song “Money (That’s What I Want),” after speaking at the LBUSD board meeting Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022. Photo by Stephen Carr.



Members of the California School Employee Association, Long Beach Chapter 2, rally for a new classified workers contract, outside the Long Beach Unified School District board meeting, at the LBUSD head office Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022. Photo by Stephen Carr.

Long Beach Unified sees omicron-fueled attendance drop

BY CHRISTIAN MAY-SUZUKI / Reporter

Attendance at the Long Beach Unified School District has taken a sharp fall in the ‘21-’22 school year, thanks in large part to the omicron variant of COVID-19.

Attendance coming out of winter break in January fell to an approximately 70% weekly average districtwide, but that number rebounded to 87% by the end of the month.

In December, the district saw a 91.81% attendance rate—and that number represented a drop off from last year’s numbers by almost 4 percentage points.

That’s compared to the ‘20-’21 school year, when attendance figures hovered around 95.6%. District officials hope to see numbers rebound to that level by the ‘24-’25 year.

To that end, programs are being instituted to help encourage attendance and reassure parents and students during this tumultuous time.

“We know that chronic absenteeism impacts learning,” Eftychiou said. “We’re implementing an ‘All-In’ attendance initiative that includes direct outreach to students and families to encourage their attendance and support them in any way we can to overcome any barriers to school attendance.”

While Eftychiou said the district can’t speculate reasons for all of the absences, the general consensus is that the main causes are students having family members who were ill, were ill themselves, or were waiting for a COVID-19 test results, which takes several days if using the PCR test.

The district, though, has been proactive about providing a safe environment for students, including partnering with Long Beach Department of Health and Human Services to offer testing clinics Monday through Fridays at Cabrillo High School for both students

and employees.

“Our schools are in a better position to maintain in-person learning than at the pandemic’s outset, thanks in part to a proactive vaccination effort among employees early on, followed by continued vaccination education, including continuous publicizing of vaccine clinics in partnership with Long Beach Health and Human Services,” Eftychiou said.

In addition to the health of students and staff, the district also has other reasons to continue pushing for as many healthy and present students as possible: A recent hit in attendance paired with a declining enrollment trend over the past decade has impacted district funding. In the 2022-23 school year, the LBUSD expects its general fund revenues to drop by \$54.3 million, to \$729.8 million.

Renee Arkus, the LBUSD’s executive director of fiscal services, said during

for this spring semester also include Dominguez Hills, Fullerton, Pomona, San Bernardino and Sonoma.

With the addition of the Southern California institutions, more than half of the 25 Cal State University campuses are now participating in the CSUCCESS program.

Throughout the pandemic, the CSU system spent more than \$18 million to purchase more than 21,000 laptops and tablets as well as 10,000 mobile Wi-Fi hotspots for students. Systemwide, schools also loaned out millions of dollars worth of existing equipment amid the pandemic.

Long Beach State alone received \$5 million from the CARES Act for the purchase of laptops, tablets and hotspots, according to Min Yao, vice president and CIO of the campus’s division of information technology. In addition to the iPads being handed out this semester, the university has loaned more than 2,000 laptops to students, Woods said.

The school maintains ownership of the devices but loans them to students for the duration of their education at the university, according to the CSULB website. Upon graduation, students are required to return their devices.

The university will not monitor student’s day-to-day activity on the iPads, CSULB said. However, the school does monitor network traffic and will alert IT staff if a student conducts illegal activity on the iPad or downloads an application not found in the official Apple Apps Store.

“At Apple, we believe that education is a powerful force for equity and opportunity, and that technology can empower all students to achieve their goals,” Susan Prescott, Apple’s vice president of education and enterprise marketing, said ahead of the initiative’s launch last year. “We’re thrilled that iPad Air and the incredible education apps ... will be central to the experience at CSU campuses across California.” ■

a December board meeting that each percentage point in attendance represents about \$7 million.

The state, though, has provided districts with COVID-19 aid to help counteract these losses, and a bill was introduced last month that looked to remove the average daily attendance portion of the K-12 state funding.

California is one of only six states that factor average daily attendance into districts’ baseline funding formula, according to state Sen. Anthony Portantino, D-La Cañada Flintridge, who introduced the bill.

Instead of using attendance, the formula proposed by the bill would use enrollment figures instead, so long as a “maintenance of effort” to address consistently absent students is demonstrated.

Mike Guardabascio contributed to this report. ■

Test Scores

Continued from cover page

student groups.

The California Department of Education canceled standardized testing for the 2019-20 school year due to the disruption from the pandemic. It cautioned that year-to-year comparisons are difficult because fewer students took tests and districts had more leeway to give localized exams.

Nonetheless, State Superintendent Tony Thurmond in a statement said the results reflect the pandemic’s impact.

“The statewide performance data from last year confirm what we heard from school districts and county offices throughout the year,” Thurmond said.

“Namely, the challenges that students and educators faced during the pandemic were multi-dimensional and disruptive to learning and mental health. Our goal now is to move all students forward.”

In one of the larger setbacks in recent years, 66% of Long Beach Unified students failed to meet state standards for math last year, up from 54% in the 2018-19 school year.

The drop in achievement comes as the district had been showing consistent progress. In the 2017-18 school year, 57% of students failed to meet math standards, down from 61% the previous year.

Scores were lower for Black, Latino and socioeconomically disadvantaged students,

with more than 80% of Black students failing to meet state math standards, up from 72% in the 2018-19 school year.

The scores reflect tests for students in grades 3-8 and high school juniors.

Long Beach Unified spokesman Chris Eftychiou said several factors contributed to the lower scores.

In one change, the district opted to use a localized version of an English assessment for grades 3-5, instead of using the state version of the test, which impacted results. And while the district worked to get as many students tested as possible, the overall participation rate was just over 80% last year, compared to 98% in previous years.

“These challenges are being seen statewide and nationwide, and while we cannot point to specific causes from these data alone, it’s clear that the pandemic and virtual learning negatively impacted student growth, more so in math and for students in early grades,” Eftychiou wrote in an email.

Eftychiou said the district is intervening at all grade levels to give students extra support, including mentoring and tutoring.

“We’re also using a suite of assessments and tools to gather mid-year data on student progress to work with teachers, students and families on accelerating learning as we emerge from the pandemic years,” he said.

Statewide, more than a third of students failed to meet math standards, while nearly 69% of students in Los Angeles County didn’t meet standards, up from 61% in the 2018-19 year.

Rick Miller, chief executive officer of CORE Districts, an association representing Long Beach, Santa Ana, Sacramento, San Francisco and other large California school districts, said the pandemic exacerbated longstanding disparities in education.

“We’re seeing that the kids of color, the kids in poverty, the kids who are the furthest from success, they were the ones harmed the greatest,” he said.

Miller said the state’s plummeting math scores were alarming and reflect longtime struggles with the subject. Miller said math is particularly challenging for students in distance learning because many parents are uncomfortable with math and can’t offer much help.

“There’s just no question we’ve learned in this pandemic that in-person instruction is far superior to distance learning,” he said.

He said the state is working on a new math curriculum that involves building a stronger framework with elementary school teachers.

More students also struggled in English language arts.

In Long Beach, 49% of students failed to meet state standards for English, up from 46% in the 2018-19 year.

Statewide, just over half of all students met English standards.

Long Beach also saw a slight increase in chronic absenteeism, with a rate of 15.7% last year, up from 15.1% in the 2018-19 school year. Black students saw the highest increase, with 25% chronically absent, up from 22%.

In comparison, 17.2% of Latino students were chronically absent, up from 16%, while 6.8% of white students were absent, down from 10.2%. Asian students saw an 8.9% absent rate, up from 8%.

The statewide absenteeism rate was 14.3%, up from 12%.

Eftychiou said the district is implementing an “All-In” attendance initiative that includes direct outreach to students and families to encourage their attendance and support them to overcome any barriers to school attendance.

Long Beach’s four-year graduation rate saw a slight decrease at 84.3% last year, down from 87.5%, which the district attributed to the pandemic’s overall impact on student learning and mental health.

While the pandemic has brought challenges, the state Education Department in a statement said California, with an influx of new funding, is committed to helping students.

Last year, Gov Gavin Newsom signed a \$123.9 billion education package that provides the highest level of K–12 funding in state history. ■

To postpone or not? High schools grapple with hosting dances during a pandemic

BY TYLER HENDRICKSON / Reporter

By the time the graduating class of 2022 receives their diplomas this spring, they’ll have spent more than half of their high school years navigating the restrictions and uncertainty that have come with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pursuit of “normalcy” has mostly been a fool’s errand the past two years, and students and administrators are often left deciding among a number of imperfect options.

As cases spiked following the recent holiday season, and schools once again faced increased restrictions for on-campus events, choices had to be made. The timing of the omicron surge coincided with long-scheduled winter formal dances at area high schools, and there was no uniform solution for each campus.

At Lakewood High, the school had already committed thousands of dollars to the winter formal dance, scheduled for Jan. 8 at Mile Square Golf Course in Fountain Valley. The school decided to forge ahead with the event as scheduled, with additional safety measures in place.

“With all the restrictions coming down, it was like déjà vu to the students,” said Lakewood Activities Director Worren Booth. “They wanted to get (the dance) in before school shut down. They were scared that this was their last opportunity. They told me, ‘We don’t want to move anything or we’ll lose our money and we’ll lose the opportunity of having a dance this year.’ So they were excited about getting it in.”

Lakewood senior Katelyn Kham hadn’t gone to any school dances prior to the pandemic, so this was her last opportunity to attend a winter formal. She admitted to having some nerves about attending the dance given the circumstances but didn’t want to miss out on the opportunity.

“I was honestly really excited because it was my first dance, but I was also a little wary about COVID and everything,” Kham explained. “But the administrators on site were very adamant about the masks and made sure that everybody was wearing one at all times.”

Members of the student council were worried that attendance might suffer at the dance, but the turnout was strong.

“We were a little nervous if people were going to show up or if they would decide not to go,” admitted senior Sydney Goodin. “But honestly, it was a



Lakewood High School students Iris Mang and Philomena Ibasco attended the school’s winter formal dance earlier this month. Courtesy of Lakewood High School.

great time because of all the activities. Other than just the dancing, we had a carriage ride and video games and karaoke that everyone tried.”

Booth shared the same sentiment from his conversations with students immediately after the dance.

“They had a great time,” Booth said. “It was positive vibes all throughout the following week with the kids sharing pictures. They enjoyed getting out and being with each other dressed up. There was a lot of school spirit that night.”

While Lakewood went ahead with their formal as scheduled, Wilson High decided to take a different approach. The Bruins were scheduled to host their winter formal on Jan. 29 at the exact same venue but opted to delay the event until March 19. According to Wilson Activities Director Erin Fekjar, it was the students who pushed for the postponement.

“They were the ones who said we need to change it,” Fekjar explained. “They said, ‘We want a safer environment. A lot of us are in winter sports or we’re gearing up for spring sports, so we don’t want to get sick, we don’t want to be on the dance floor and everybody getting all COVID-y all over one another, so can we move it?’ And I think that’s proved to be a really good decision.”

While Wilson’s dance was set to be at the same venue—which offers both indoor and outdoor space—the circumstances for each event were very different. In addition to having an extra three weeks of lead time before the event, Lakewood’s lower enrollment allowed for a smaller event. Lakewood’s formal had around 425 students attend, while Wilson was expecting upwards of 700 attendees.

Wilson’s administration will still require proof of vaccination or a negative test come March and require masks to be worn at the event, but the students are hoping things will be safer and more relaxed as we move closer to spring.

“I think the current feeling of what’s happening with omicron, the students decided to take the precautions now,” Fekjar explained. “Because we want to have the most fun night that we possibly can with the least amount of restrictions.” ■





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Online Learning

Continued from cover page

online classes (those without set meeting times) were the most common form of online class. Before and during the pandemic, the asynchronous format allowed students to learn at their own pace, on their own schedule.

“Many of our students are working, they’ve got family responsibilities—they just have full lives,” Douglas said. “The opportunity to take online classes allows them to . . . take care of those responsibilities, and still complete their educational goals.”

Even synchronous online classes (those with fixed meeting times) provide more flexibility for students and faculty by eliminating travel time, Douglas noted. For students at Cal State Long Beach, commutes often include frustratingly extensive searches for a parking spot, Jeynes said.

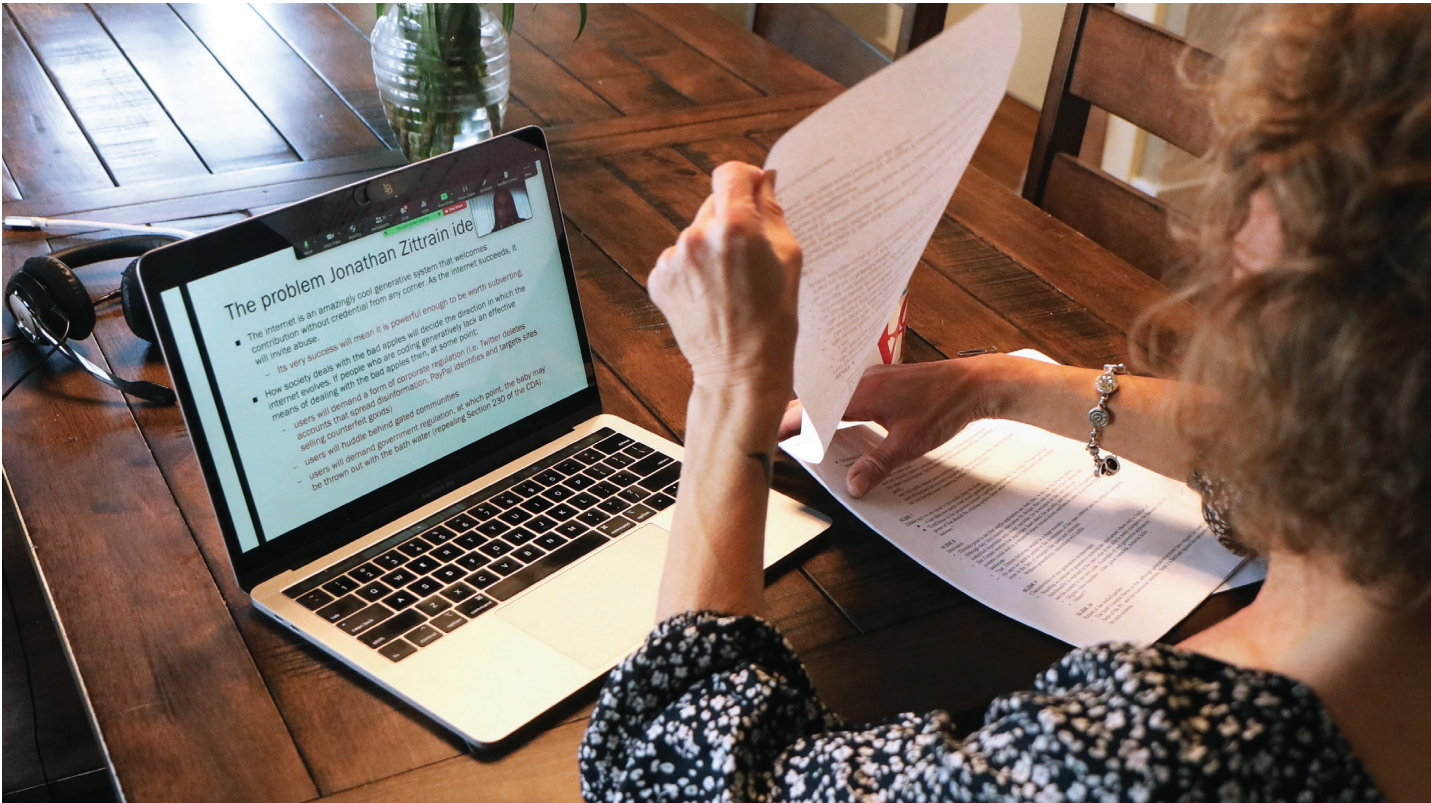
On the flipside, the digital divide among students became more apparent amid the pandemic and the shift to a virtual education, Douglas said. Many students lacked the technology required for online learning, including laptops, tablets or regularly accessible Wi-Fi.

“Clearly, there are some homes that are higher in socioeconomic status than others,” Jeynes said, adding that the issue is close to his heart having been raised in New York’s inner city by his single mother.

“I’m concerned they’re placed at a greater disadvantage than they would be if they were simply doing in-person classes,” he said.

Schools from elementary through college took steps to address technological inequalities by providing thousands of students with items free of charge. Cal State Long Beach, for example, received \$5 million in CARES Act funding to purchase laptops, tablets and hotspots for students.

But even when you account for the digital divide, the online format still hasn’t been a panacea. It does not lend itself to various types of classes, particularly those that require hands-



Cal State Long Beach journalism professor Gwen Shaffer turns the page on her notes during a virtual class in her Belmont Shore home Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2022. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

on training and experience that cannot be gained virtually such as the trades, sciences and nursing, Douglas said. These classes are often much smaller and continued to meet during the pandemic, with proper safety measures such as masking and distancing, he added.

Based on the continued demand for online courses, Douglas said the benefits clearly outweigh any challenges as far as students are concerned. Two years into the pandemic and the course breakdown at LBCC is about 50% in person, 50% online, he said.

Douglas said it is hard to know what to expect in the future, but he is certain demand for online courses will remain well above pre-pandemic levels. As it is, online courses fill up faster than in person classes, he said.

“I would say we’ll likely end up at 55% face-to-face, 45% online,” Douglas said. “But we’re monitoring what the students are saying to us with their registration. Many have gotten accustomed to the online learning environment.”

At Cal State Long Beach, Jeynes said his students have made it clear there is high demand for online courses. He said he hopes the administration gives up any notion that the university should return to the previously normal mix of the vast majority of courses only being offered in person.

“It’s an unrealistic goal,” Jeynes said. “All these students have experienced online as a result of COVID and . . . we’re going to have more students who prefer online than before. If we don’t go with the trend, we run the risk of being left behind.”

Long Beach City College is actively encouraging teachers—for in-person as well as online instruction—to utilize Canvas, an integrated online tool used by dozens of colleges across the country. The platform allows students to stay up to date with their grades and assignments and allows for the integration of various tools for students and teachers alike.

Cal State Long Beach recently began the transition away from its in-house platform, BeachBoard, to Canvas. Early adoption of Canvas began this semester, with all courses being on Canvas by fall 2023, according to the university website.

“The model that called for universities to develop their own software, in a lot of cases, led to really interesting tools being developed that weren’t supported for the long term,” Canvas Senior Director Ryan Lufkin said. “By going with a third-party vendor, you get the benefit of not only cutting edge tools that are constantly being improved, but they’re also supported long term.”

Since the onset of the pandemic, adoption of Canvas by universities has quadrupled, according to Lufkin.

Early in the public health crisis, the shift online was rudimentary, with many teachers attempting to “shoehorn” the traditional classroom experience into the virtual space, Lufkin said. But after a year of primarily online learning,

teachers began intentionally designing lessons for the digital environment, including having assignments, materials and tests built into the virtual classroom and leveraging engagement tools such as discussion boards, Lufkin said.

“The bar in technology-enhanced learning has been raised, probably for good at this point,” Lufkin said. “We continue to add features and functionality.”

Canvas was built with an open architecture, Lufkin said, which makes plugging in other products such as Zoom a seamless process.

Aside from adopting platforms like Canvas, colleges and universities are taking steps to encourage the broader use of virtual learning. One area LBCC is examining is the integration of technologies into the classroom that allow for classes where some students are physically in the room while others tune in remotely, Douglas said.

“That technology is available and we’re looking into a couple different [ones],” Douglas said. “It allows us a great deal of flexibility in terms of how we offer instruction.”

Flexibility has become a part of many people’s lifestyles, Lufkin said, which will continue to drive demand for virtual—fully online and hybrid—courses permanently moving forward.

Jeynes, for his part, said he was very strongly against online learning prior to the pandemic, but his experience over the past two years has transformed his view. While he is still opposed to asynchronous online classes, he said the online format has been a pleasant experience for his synchronous courses.

As far as students’ grades are concerned, Douglas said the shift online has not had a negative effect.

“One of the fears was that students would not succeed in an online environment and that our course success rates would fall,” Douglas said. “But we’ve not found that to be true. It’s almost equivalent.” ■

Newly renovated Kleefeld Museum at CSULB to open publicly this weekend



Amanda Fruta, of CSULB, stands in the 3,000-square-foot main gallery room at Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum with artist Linda Besemer for her upcoming exhibition, “StrokeRollFoldSheetSlabGlitcht,” as the university expanded and updated the museum at Cal State Long Beach in Long Beach Monday, Jan 31, 2022. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

BY CHEANTAY JENSEN / Reporter

After nearly two years of construction, Cal State Long Beach’s newly renovated and expanded Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum, formerly known as the University Art Museum, is just days away from welcoming guests once again.

The museum will open to the public Saturday, Feb. 12, presenting an entirely new concept in appearance and purpose since its founding in 1973. Notably, the museum is bigger. Much, much bigger. Four thousand square feet were added to the museum since construction began in June 2020, more than doubling the exhibit space.

Three thousand square feet of structure alone went toward the Kleefeld’s Main Gallery, built with moveable walls that could allow multiple exhibitions at a time. There are also two other smaller dedicated gallery spaces, where the museum can host at least three exhibitions in a given season. Two shows were typically the most the museum could host before, according to museum spokesperson Amanda Fruta.

Both the exterior and interior spaces of the museum exude a modern feel. Pfeiffer Partners Architects were behind the metallic, triangular motifs on the building’s façade and roof, a nod to the nearby Walter Pyramid. The Kleefeld kept part of the brick façade next to the entryway, but guests will now walk inside through a new, near 15-foot-tall diamond offset glass vestibule. Inside, concrete floors contrast stark white walls, but the overall atmosphere is bright and airy.

Expansion efforts and much-needed renovations ate up the bulk of the project’s \$24 million price tag, though the budget was shared with the state-funded Horn Center renovation next door while the Kleefeld was funded by private donations, including \$10 million from the museum’s namesake, artist Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld, as first reported by the Daily 49er.

But the museum’s transformation also includes a host of amenities designed to foster a message of inclusivity to students and the greater community.

A spacious outdoor garden decorated with native and water-wise plants surrounds new outdoor seating areas. Inside, the museum is a new state-of-the-art education laboratory that will be available with materials that both youth and adults can use, as well as a reading and archives room.

The visitors lobby also features a small gallery easily accessible through both the entrance and the museum’s adjoining Horn Center, and will host a forthcoming retail shop that will sell handmade or wearable artworks by recent graduates of CSULB’s School of Art, School of Industrial Design and other interdisciplinary programs.

Kleefeld’s opening on Feb. 12 won’t be launching with the gusto it had originally planned for. Health precautions are keeping the Kleefeld to limited visiting hours, though in the next few months the museum anticipates it can begin to roll out extended hours and other intended programming, including poetry readings, wellness programs, and opportunities for “quiet and loud hours” for guests, Fruta said.

Still, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on

Feb. 12, visitors can take in five new exhibitions, with Los-Angeles based artist Linda Besemer’s exhibition “StrokeRollFoldSheetSlabGlitch” to headline in the Main Gallery.

“StrokeRollFoldSheetSlabGlitch” features over 30 years of the artist’s work produced between 1993 and 2021 and showcases key moments in Besemer’s evolution as an artist, from their explorations with early traditional gestural abstraction (an intuitive style of painting that is characterized by movement) to their most recent “glitch” series. Besemer’s art is markedly bright, featuring bold and vivid color palettes and collage-styled optical illusions.

“It’s such a treat to see all this work together and to be in a brand new space,” Besemer said. “I’m honored and really excited.”

The exhibition will be available for viewing from Feb. 12 through June 25. Besemer will also kick off the museum’s

Artist Talks series at noon on Feb. 16, where Besemer will give a guided tour of their exhibition while sharing their creative journey and process.

In the Mini Gallery, visitors can view seven works by acclaimed Canadian painter Rita Letendre. Some students may already recognize the artist’s work, as her mural “Sunforce,” painted in 1965, still resides on a suspended walkway connecting two buildings in the Liberal Arts area of campus. Her exhibition “Eternal Space” also follows key points in her artistic journey, from her early work in the 60’s, employing gestural abstraction techniques, to her more atmospheric airbrushed acrylics developed in the ‘80s. The exhibition also honors the artist, who died in November last year.

“Eternal Space” can be seen in the Mini Gallery until March 26.

Adorning the walls in the Community Gallery, which is accessed through the museum’s lobby or through the adjoining Horn Center, is “Sacred Path,” a collection of works by Torrance-based Vietnamese painter, Hung Viet Nguyen. Nguyen’s fantastical impasto landscape paintings feature a highly textured painting technique not truly appreciated unless seen up close. Visitors can see Nguyen’s work until May 7 and also meet the artist March 15 as part of the Artist Talks series at the campus.

A selection of works by artist Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld will also be available for viewing inside the eponymous gallery until June 25. And in the archives and drawing room are two lithographic prints by Mark Bradford, though viewing is only available by appointment only.

The Kleefeld Museum will operate on limited hours until further notice, with open hours Tuesday-Thursday from noon to 5 p.m. Fridays will be noon to 5 p.m. via appointment only. Every second Saturday of the month the museum will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. with available tours of the campus sculpture gardens at noon.

Kleefeld officials expect to announce an open house event in March with artists present and a formal celebration of the museum’s opening in May. ■



Gwen Shaffer, a journalism professor at Cal State Long Beach, teaches a virtual class in her Belmont Shore home Tuesday, Jan. 31, 2022. Photo by Brandon Richardson.



The Carolyn Campagna Kleefeld Contemporary Art Museum at Cal State Long Beach in Long Beach Monday, Jan 31, 2022. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.



Shuttered once again, Community Hospital Long Beach is being used as a COVID-19 testing site Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Community Hospital likely to be sold as city seeks to pay operator for millions in losses

BY BRANDON RICHARDSON and JASON RUIZ / Reporters

Community Hospital may fall into private hands for the first time in its 98-year history, with a sale in the works to the company that most recently operated the facility.

Molina Wu Network lost roughly \$30 million since assuming the lease for the East Long Beach hospital in 2019. The hospital reopened in January 2021, but less than a year later was shut down again due to mounting financial losses.

The lease agreement included a provision requiring the city to reimburse the MWN for operational losses if the lease was terminated early by either party.

Councilman Daryl Supernaw, who led the charge to reopen the hospital when MemorialCare closed it, said the lease didn’t expose the city for any losses beyond what the property is worth.

That figure is being assessed right now, with a potential sale to be finalized as soon as this spring, MWN spokesman Brandon Dowling said.

Both Supernaw and Councilwoman Suzie Price, whose district now includes Community, said the economic risks were worth taking to try and preserve the facility.

“This is what [my] constituents wanted,” Supernaw said of the lease agreement to reopen the hospital. “So

that’s what we endeavored to do.”

Dowling said last month that the company is committed to its plan to operate a mental wellness campus on the site, which it announced in November— as well as possibly developing housing.

The transition away from acute care means the facility would not require the upward of \$75 million investment in seismic retrofits, as acute care medical facilities have the highest seismic standards in the state.

Under the city’s Land Use Element, the Community Hospital property is zoned for neighborhood serving uses—such as health care—or moderate density residential, which is in line with the surrounding area. New buildings on the property can be developed up to six stories tall.

Appraisals underway

The key question now is what the property is worth.

Should the property be valued at less than \$30 million, the city would essentially “sell” the 8.7-acre site to MWN for \$0 and the lease agreement would be fulfilled. For example, if the property is assessed at \$20 million, the city would not be required to cover the additional \$10 million.

If it’s assessed at more than \$30 million, MWN would have to pay the difference.

Separate appraisals are underway by the city and MWN, which will then be compared and a sales price agreed upon,

Dowling said in a statement.

While negotiations for a sale to MWN are underway, Principal Deputy City Attorney Richard Anthony said there is a remote possibility the city could list the site on the open market for other potential buyers, but it would still be on the hook for MWN’s losses.

The city could also try to retain the property, Economic Development Director John Keisler said, though he did not elaborate on where the city would find millions to repay MWN.

A 2019 staff report stated the property could be worth up to \$90 million, provided the seismic retrofit work was completed and it was licensed by the state for acute care. However, Supernaw said that a previous assessment conducted before the city and MWN entered into the lease agreement put the value of the land below \$20 million in its current condition.

The future of the property

While Dowling said more detailed plans for the site will be released in coming weeks, he said the company wants to continue its legacy as a medical campus and hopes to open the campus later this year with various vendors and health care providers dedicated to mental health.

“We want to ensure that the property can continue to be used for healthcare-related purposes,” Dowling said. “In addition, we are looking into the feasibility of adding

housing to the campus.”

Price said the neighborhood is supportive of MWN’s plan to make it a mental health care facility but it wants to know what kind of quality of life safeguards will be included. Price said she’s familiar with a similar concept in Orange County that provides services for substance abuse, detox and other mental health needs.

“I have seen those models work very well,” Price said. “My commitment was we’re going to have a robust conversation about what’s ultimately going to go there.”

Reality of the hospital’s future

In 2018, staring down the barrel of millions of dollars in seismic retrofits, Community Hospital operator MemorialCare shuttered the facility, claiming it was not feasible to make the necessary upgrades.

For months, city officials scrambled to identify a new operator. Multiple bids were made and subsequently pulled—except for the proposal by Molina Wu Network, which was ultimately awarded the 45-year lease with practically no liability.

MWN spent 18 months and millions of dollars to reopen the facility for emergency and acute care services. To date the city has paid \$2.5 million toward the reopening in the form of reimbursements for costs related to seismic retrofit, according to Keisler.

After numerous delays at the state level, the facility was issued its acute care license and received its first patient in two years on Jan. 5, 2021. The behavioral health ward reopened two weeks later, followed by the emergency department on May 12.

Citing an average occupancy rate of only 32% and less than 24 emergency rooms visits per day, MWN later announced the hospital’s closure and future plans for its wellness campus. It surrendered its acute care license to the state on Dec. 31, Dowling said.

At the time, 328 employees were served Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notifications (WARN)—60 day notices of the termination of their employment. According to Dowling, about 298 employees had been terminated by Jan. 8.

About 30 people remain employed by MWN at the shuttered hospital, Dowling said, including accounting, security, facilities and a small number of health professionals who will continue working at the wellness campus.

While there are likely to be concerns about the city selling the property, Supernaw said people need to ask what this property really is, given the costs necessary to have it operate as it had for decades before being closed down by MemorialCare in 2018.

“We wouldn’t want to lose this property because it can function as a hospital?” Supernaw said. “Well that’s what we just went through.”

Editor’s note: John Molina—of Molina, Wu, Network—is the primary investor in the parent company that owns the Long Beach Post. ■



A COSCO ship is loaded at the Long Beach Container Terminal Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Port of Long Beach to update master plan to include environmental goals and more

BY BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

The Port of Long Beach is giving its master plan, a document that guides all decision-making, a comprehensive update for the first time since 1990, with

a public information meeting slated for this Thursday, Feb. 10.

The existing master plan identifies permitted uses for the nearly 2,700 acres of land and 4,500 acres of water at the nation’s second busiest port complex.

Port master plans are required by the California Coastal Act of 1976.

Since the last comprehensive update over three decades ago, the port and the shipping industry have undergone significant changes in

Downtown Long Beach sees rebound in residential market

BY CHRISTIAN MAY-SUZUKI / Reporter

The market for residential properties in Downtown Long Beach saw a rebound in 2021, with occupancy and rents slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels, according to a 2021 Q4 Economic Snapshot released last month by the Downtown Long Beach Alliance (DLBA).

The recovery comes as cities across Southern California continue to find their own solutions to homelessness and a lack of affordable housing that has come to the forefront in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Downtown Long Beach added 586 units to its stock in 2021, which includes both the 271-unit Volta on Pine that was completed in April and the Shoreline Gateway project, which opened in November with another 315 units. In 2020, by comparison, three multi-family residential projects were completed that produced a total of 414 units, according to the DLBA’s report.

However, the DLBA still

acknowledges that the current supply for lower and middle class families is lacking.

“Downtown Long Beach and the city as a whole are in need of additional housing units for households of all income levels, with the economic effects of COVID-19 further exacerbating financial disparities,” the DLBA’s 2021 Q4 Economic Snapshot said.

About 80% of Downtown’s housing is occupied by renters rather than owners, which is roughly 20 percentage points higher than lower density areas in Long Beach.

The return to a pre-pandemic occupancy rate of 94% in Downtown and 96.9% citywide is encouraging, and several other areas in the region like Downtown Santa Monica (94.7%) and San Pedro (96.3%) have also gotten close to the desired 95% mark, dropping from the higher rates seen in currently in other major cities in the region, including Fullerton (98.9%), Costa Mesa (98.2%), and El Segundo (97.4%).

Class A properties — which are the

most expensive of the three and have an average age of just seven years — have an occupancy rate of 95.2%. On the other hand, Class B properties are significantly more occupied at 98.3%, despite the buildings being 60 years old on average. That’s likely because rent is \$570 less than Class A per month while still offering a higher quality of life than can be found in Class C. With their relatively cheap rental average of \$1,280 per month, those Class C buildings are occupied at a healthy 96.5% rate.

Rents have also returned to pre-pandemic growth levels, increasing by over 7.5% across residential units on a per square foot basis. After rising by just 2 cents to \$2.69 per square foot from 2018-2020, 2021 saw a 20-cent increase to \$2.89 per month.

While increasing rent prices are a positive sign for those looking at economic growth, the many renters of Long Beach may not appreciate an increase in their cost of living.

According to the American

operations and goals.

“Our container cargo has grown an astounding 480% since the last comprehensive overhaul, and it was before we became an industry leader in reducing emissions associated with goods movement with the green port policy,” Executive Director Mario Cordero said in an email.

Last year, the port moved a record 9,384,368 20-foot equivalents (the standard measure of a shipping container), a 230% increase from 1995 when the port handled 2,843,501 TEUs. Cargo volumes would have been even lower in 1990, with throughput steadily rising each year with few exceptions, according to port data.

In 2006, the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles jointly approved the Clean Air Action Plan, a first-of-its-kind plan to dramatically reduce emissions from port operations. The ultimate goals would see the port cutting emissions to 80% of 1990 levels by 2050 chiefly through electrification.

Many of the proposed updates to the master plan are revised goals and language to bring the document in line with the CAAP and the transition to zero emissions. The 238-page draft also includes updates to capital improvement projects, policy language, and planning and development goals, in large part related to sea-level rise and climate change adaptation.

One of the most notable changes to the master plan is the addition of a new section: Environmental Justice and Tribal Resources Element. The section focuses on “advancing the principles of environmental justice, equality and protection of tribal resources.”

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A private jet sits with other small, personal aircraft at Long Beach Airport Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Long Beach Airport officials expect increased air traffic around Super Bowl

BY BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

With the 2022 Super Bowl at SoFi Stadium a quick jaunt up the 405 Freeway, Long Beach Airport officials are gearing up for an increased number of travelers and a surge in air traffic in the days leading up to and after the event.

The Los Angeles Rams will take on the Cincinnati Bengals at the Rams’ home stadium in Inglewood on Sunday, Feb. 13. The new, \$5.5 billion stadium (the most expensive ever built) was selected to host the Super Bowl in 2017, while the Rams’ advancement to the championship game was decided late last month.

At 22.4 miles away, Long Beach is the second closest to the stadium of the five commercial airports in the Los Angeles region. Los Angeles International Airport is the closest to SoFi at 3.6 miles, while Burbank, John Wayne and Ontario range from 30 to 53 miles away from the stadium.

To accommodate increased travel, airport staff are working with the National Football League and the Federal Aviation Administration as well as its tenants to plan accordingly and maintain compliance with the small municipal facility’s noise ordinance. Additional airfield parking spaces for visiting charter planes have been identified, according to staff.

“We are game ready as we welcome football fans visiting the region for Super Bowl LVI,” airport Director Cynthia Guidry said in an email. “This world-class event ... promises to bring an influx of visitor spending and excitement to our entire region.”

The increased travel will be welcome at the airfield after two years of low passenger volumes due to the pandemic. The number of travelers passing through the airport has rebounded significantly but

remains well below pre-pandemic levels. The facility also is in the midst of the usual post-holiday slowdown, according to airport spokeswoman Kate Kuykendall.

While the number of commercial flights is capped under the airport’s strict noise ordinance, charter flights are not. However, each charter flight is subject to the same hours of operation as commercial flights (7 a.m. to 10 p.m.) and require prior written permission to land at the facility to ensure they abide by the ordinance, Kuykendall said.

Aboard commercial flights, airport staff anticipate higher passenger loads beginning Thursday, Feb. 10, with the busiest travel day expected to be the day after the game, Kuykendall said.

To capitalize on increased travel, Paradies Lagardere—the primary concessions provider at Long Beach Airport—will open a pop-up retail store for football fans in the outdoor garden area of the passenger concourse. Items at the pop up will include licensed Rams and Bengals merchandise, including shirts, hats, mugs, tumblers, shot glasses and drink koozies, among others, Paradies confirmed.

“We’re excited to partner with Long Beach Airport to celebrate the Super Bowl with our travelers,” Tish Stockton, retail general manager for Paradies at LGB said in an email, adding that the shop will have fresh merch showcasing the winning team Monday morning after the game.

Economists project the event will generate between \$234 and \$477 million in economic benefits, including between \$12 million and \$22 million in tax revenue for the region.

The anticipated Super Bowl swell in flights will come shortly after airport officials reported that nearly twice as many travelers used the airport last year

as in 2020.

Last year, 2,104,444 passengers traveled through the small municipal airport, up from 1,043,773 in 2020.

“Passenger traffic at LGB is looking up,” said Airport Director Cynthia Guidry. “Although COVID-19 and its variants continue to pose challenges, these holiday travel numbers are the best indication yet that we are steadily closing the gap on returning to pre-pandemic passenger levels.”

The more than 100% increase, however, remains well below pre-pandemic travel numbers. The airport saw well over 3.5 million travelers in 2019.

In December, 261,123 passengers used Long Beach Airport, driven by holiday travel despite the omicron variant surge. The volume represents a 458% increase from December traffic in 2020, when only 46,816 passengers traveled through the airport.

December 2021’s travel numbers remain about 19% below two years prior, according to city data.

Travel has rebounded nationwide but remains below 2019 levels, according to data from the U.S. Transportation Security Administration. In December 2021, the TSA reported 14 days with more than 2 million passengers traveling through U.S. airports, compared to 26 in December 2019.

In December 2020, meanwhile, there was not a single day with over 2 million travelers. In fact, there were only nine days where the U.S. had more than 1 million passengers using the nation’s airports.

Airport officials expect the steady rebound to continue in 2022, according to Operations and Facilities Bureau Manager Ron Reeves. The airport is preparing to open its new ticketing and baggage inspection facility this spring and begin work on a new baggage claim area. ■

Port Master Plan

Continued from page 13

“The planning goals for this element include promoting equitable access to clean, healthy, and accessible coastal environments through various methods including, but not limited to, pursuing zero-emissions technologies for Port-related operations; considering environmental justice in all Harbor Development Permits; engaging regularly and consistently with the local communities, environmental justice leaders, and groups surrounding the Harbor District; utilizing best practices to maximize the effectiveness of public engagement; considering recommendations from disadvantaged communities impacted by Port operations,” the document reads, “and coordinating with local Native American tribes to obtain a better understanding of local and regional cultural resources within the Harbor District and protecting such resources.”

As a public agency, the port is required to address environmental justice due to additions to the California Coastal Act made in 2016. Key tenets of environmental justice, according to the CCA, are the availability of a healthy environment for all people; the deterrence, reduction and elimination of pollution within communities most impacted by said pollution; the inclusion of impacted communities in relevant decision making; and the consideration of recommendations made by impacted communities.

In December 2018, the California State Lands Commission adopted an environmental justice policy, followed by the California Coastal Commission in 2019.

In Long Beach, the 710 Freeway has been known by local public health advocates as the “diesel death corridor” for years. Residents who live in areas around the freeway in West and North Long Beach—particularly in the neighborhoods nearest the port—face some of the worst air pollution in the country, which has led to increased cases of asthma and cancer.

“The port master plan update will create an operationally and environmentally sustainable port land use plan,” Cordero said. “Obviously a lot has changed, and this process will allow us to incorporate previous amendments, reflect changes in the shipping industry, strategically manage resources and help us to remain competitive in the rapidly changing global economy.”

A previous draft was released in summer 2019 for public review. Feedback received by the port has been considered in the latest draft.

Public comment on the port’s updated master plan will be accepted through March 14. Comments came be submitted by emailing pmp@polb.com or in writing to Theresa Dau-Ngo, 415 W. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, CA 90802.

The virtual public meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 10. ■

County eviction ban extended, with low-income renters shielded through June 2023

BY JASON RUIZ / Reporter

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a complex countywide eviction moratorium late last month that will phase in and phase out protections over time, but could protect the poorest households through June 2023.

Supervisors voted to approve an extension just days before its current moratorium was set to expire. The new safeguards will come in three phases, with county residents making 80% of the area median income or less—which is \$80,000 for a family of four in Los Angeles County—being protected the longest.

While Long Beach had for a time been setting its own rules or aligning with the state for what evictions were allowed or banned during the pandemic, it more recently aligned with the county. The changes will apply to Long Beach renters, according to the city attorney’s office.

The first phase of the extension will see all renter protections reinstated, including those barring no-fault evictions for reasons like renovating units, and will prohibit evictions filed for non-payment of rent due to COVID-19 hardship.

Those protections will also include anti-harassment and retaliation provisions for both residential and commercial tenants and will last through May.

In June, the second phase will begin, and some of the protections provided in Phase One, like barring evictions tied to owners moving into properties only if the tenant was not financially affected by the pandemic, will go away. Landlords will also be able to evict tenants who deny them entry into a unit unless the attempted entry constitutes harassment.

In this phase, renters making 80% of the area median income or less are able to self-certify that they have a financial hardship and could have

until December 2023 to pay any rent payments missed through the end of this year.

Other protections like those barring evictions for unauthorized occupants or pets would also remain through this phase.

Phase Three, which begins in January 2023 and ends six months later, will continue to protect those tenants who self-certified as being in a lower income bracket, but all other eviction protections for almost all other tenants will be lifted.

The Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 on Jan. 25 to extend the moratorium with Janice Hahn, who represents Long Beach, saying, “I hope my landlords forgive me” before casting her vote.

Supervisor Katherine Barger, the lone opposition vote, asked the board to consider a postponement or forgiveness of property tax payments for landlords who are unable to collect rents, saying the county needed to bear some of the burdens of continuing to extend the eviction moratorium.

Elaine Hutchison, president of the Apartment Association, California Southern Cities, submitted a letter to the board calling for it to oppose the extension in its entirety. She questioned why commercial tenants were seeing their protections largely go away and asked if that was because the economy was “in full swing” and extending it wasn’t necessary.

“The eviction moratorium is not supposed to be used for effective housing policy,” Hutchinson said. “Instead, it was in response to a health crisis... from 2020.”

Hutchinson noted that both California and New York have lifted their policies or let them expire and asked why Los Angeles County has not.

Commercial protections for large companies ended Jan. 31, but companies with nine or fewer employees will have their protections extended as well. Larger companies will have until July 31 to pay back-rent, while smaller companies will have until the end of January 2023. ■

HELP US PROTECT CATALINA ISLAND’S ECONOMY AND TOURISM

Join the Catalina community and businesses by visiting www.change.org/catalinaexpress to sign an important petition NOW to help us protect Catalina Island’s economy and vital tourism industry!

Catalina Express, the essential ferry service that transports passengers to and from the Island is facing new regulations from the California Air Resources Board (CARB). Under CARB’s current proposed rules, which would take effect in **2023**, Catalina Express ferries will again be required to modify the engines on all their vessels. The cost to repower an existing vessel is \$7 million but will displace approximately 50% of the passenger capacity. The cost to build a new vessel is approximately \$20 million, costing a combined total of upwards of \$120 million. State funding is needed to make this transition feasible. Without financial assistance from the State, these proposed rules will **significantly disrupt the transport of residents, visitors, and workers, while also negatively impacting transportation safety, efficiency, reliability, and affordability.**

Your voice makes a difference! As CARB plans to act on this important proposal in early Spring, express your support now for Catalina Express and share your concerns about CARB’s current proposed regulations that could harm Catalina Island tourism without new funding.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS IMPORTANT EFFORT, SCAN QR CODE OR VISIT: WWW.PROTECTCATALINAISLAND.COM



Amid omicron wave, Long Beach has yet to impose vaccine mandate for employees

BY ANTHONY PIGNATARO / Reporter

Though the city of Los Angeles passed an employee vaccination mandate back in November and Long Beach officials said news about its own edict would be forthcoming after the first of the new year, the city still does not have a COVID-19 vaccine mandate in place for its workers.

The mandate is seen by public health experts as an important way to help curb the spread of COVID-19, particularly among firefighters, police and other workers who interact with the public. Infections fueled by the omicron variant surged throughout January, with case rates and hospitalizations hitting points not seen since last year at this time.

A vaccine mandate is critical “because citizens deserve to know that if they call 911, the men and women responding to the call are vaccinated,” said Andrew Noymer, an epidemiologist at UC Irvine. “Vaccinated people are less likely to spread the virus.”

Negotiations between the city and various employee labor organizations over a mandate began in September, according to the city



Morgan Hamilton takes information from a patient at the COVID-19 testing site at the Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center at Houghton Park in Long Beach Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

manager’s office. Negotiations are continuing over implementation dates, details over who would qualify for an exemption and other factors, according to a Dec. 28 memo from City Manager Tom Modica.

Modica, who would ultimately have to implement such a mandate, declined to be interviewed.

“The policy remains in the process of being finalized,” Modica said through a spokesperson. “Once finalized, we will

have more information on the details.”

Labor leaders involved in the negotiations represent some of the most politically powerful organizations and constituencies, which further complicates the negotiations as the 2022 election heats up.

Mayor Robert Garcia’s office said in a statement that an update will be provided when the negotiation process ends. Garcia, who is running for the congressional seat currently held by

Rep. Alan Lowenthal, did not respond to an interview request.

One City Hall insider, who agreed to talk about the negotiations without attribution because the individual isn’t authorized to speak publicly, said the fact that many “breakthrough” infections have occurred among those who are vaccinated has played a role in the delay of the mandate.

While there was a great deal of pressure a few months ago for a mandate, interest waned when it became clear that vaccination wasn’t enough to keep many people from getting infected, the insider said.

But vaccines have been shown to keep people working and out of the hospital, according to Noymer, the epidemiologist. He said it’s not too late to implement an employee mandate, adding that COVID-19 isn’t going anywhere.

“COVID will simmer down faster the more people that get vaccinated,” he said.

Rex Pritchard, president of the Long Beach firefighter union, said he last met with Modica’s office a few weeks ago and spoke about a number of problems his organization had with a mandate.

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This Paul Tay-designed home at 651 Ultimo Ave. is listed at \$1.895 million. Listing photo.



The Paul Tay-designed home on Ultimo Avenue. Listing photo.

A Paul Tay mid-century modern home in Alamitos Heights is offered at \$1.895 million

BY TIM GROBATY / Columnist

One of the most notable homes on one of the nicest stretches of road in Alamitos Heights is a flawless Paul Tay-designed Mid-Century Modern house at 651 Ultimo Ave., listed at \$1.895 million.

Is it worth the price? If you’re willing to accept that Cliff May mid-mod homes in the city’s East End are selling for near that price, then, yes, this four-bedroom, four-and-a-half-bath Tay model can be said to be underpriced. Along with mid-mod homes designed by such stellar architects as Richard Neutra and Ed Killingsworth, a Tay home is what Cliff May homeowners hope to one day trade up to.

A USC graduate, Tay worked for the Modernist architect George Montierth in his office in the Ocean Center building in the early 1950s. Montierth designed several residences and other buildings in Downtown, Los Cerritos, Bixby Knolls and Naples, including the home at 15 The Colonnade in Naples, which went on the market in October at a price of \$10.6 million.

Tay went on his own in 1956,

opening a studio in Long Beach (though born in Pomona in 1924, Tay’s grandparents settled in Long Beach in 1901) and designed several residences here, as well as the Burnett Library at 560 E. Hill St.

The home’s current owners are Jim and Lou Anne Bynum. Lou Anne had a 25-year career at Long Beach City College, culminating in her nearly two-year role as interim superintendent-president following the firing of Reagan Romali in 2020. She was also a harbor commissioner for nearly six years from 2014 to 2020.

Neither she nor her husband knew about the home’s architect—a grievous omission by the agent who sold it—when they bought it in 2003 for \$809,000, she said. “I just liked it. I liked the bones of the house as soon as I saw it. If I’d known it was a Paul Tay I think I would have done things differently with the house,” she said.

Happily, the Bynums didn’t do anything wrong with the house. It’s of substantial strong construction and retains the trademark sharp horizontal lines, the bright natural or painted wood-beam ceilings, the insistent

integration of the outdoors with the indoors through the extravagant use of glass and windows. It remains an excellent specimen of Tay’s work that he accomplished locally before he moved north to Mendocino in 1971, where he lived until his death in 2021 at 97.

“We hardscaped the front and back,” said Bynum. “It’s a beautiful house and I hate giving it up.” Her husband’s deteriorating health prompted the couple to sell the house in order to move to Laguna Beach or Dana Point to live near their son’s family and two granddaughters.

“I always swore I’d never move to Orange County,” she sighed. “I love this house, I love this block; it’s got character, diversity in architecture, the neighbors are incredible. So now we’re going to sell it and make a profit and move to a shack down in Laguna or somewhere,” she laughed—although it’s not funny how little you can get on the coast in Orange County with just a million dollars worth of equity rattling around in your handbag.

The house’s interior lives up to the promise of its view from the street.

The living areas feature high, light wood ceilings and half-paneling; skylights bring in natural illumination and fireplaces add coziness to whatever passes in Long Beach for cold evening nights.

Extensive use of glass allows nature to make its appearance in almost every room, with windows in the upstairs stretching from wall to wall. You’ll want to set up an Amazon subscription for Windex.

The backyard and covered patio are spacious and built for entertainment. Handsome pavers lead to eating and drinking areas, including a barbecue and bar as well as a hot tub, all set amid palms, birds of paradise and other tropical flora.

Off the garage out back is a casita that Jim had used as an office, and would be perfect for that use as well as for a guest room or studio. It comes with a half-bath.

It has been a great home for the Bynums for nearly two decades, and while they’ll surely enjoy the company of their Orange County family, and not to forecast doom or dissatisfaction, but their next home is unlikely to be as nice as this one on Ultimo. ■



A living area with windows and fireplace. Listing photo.



The backyard and the casita of the Paul Tay home on Ultimo Avenue. Listing photo.

CITY OF LONG BEACH
BID OPPORTUNITIES

TITLE	BID NUMBER	DUE DATE
Engineering Design & Construction Mgmt. GWTP-1 & GWTP-2 New Wells Project	RFP (O-0751)	02/09/2022
Clinical Laboratory Services	RFP HE22-019	02/10/2022
CalRecycle CRV Pilot Program Grant Partner	RFP PW22-016	02/11/2022
LBRA Black-Serving Mental Health Services	RFQ HE22-017	02/14/2022
Furnish and Deliver Laboratory Materials And Supplies	WD-19-22	02/16/2022
Alamitos Tanks 19 & 20 Conversion Project	WD-29-22	02/18/2022
Construction Mgmt. & Inspection Svcs. for the GWTP HVAC Replacement Project	RFP (EO-3500)	02/24/2022
S-25 Sewer Lift Station Rehabilitation	WD-10-21	02/24/2022
Project Room Key	RFP HE22-018	02/28/2022
Market Street Corridor Improvements Project	R-7177	03/02/2022
Spinnaker Bay Drive Water Main Replacement, Phase 1	WD-17-20	03/03/2022

Bidder Registration
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.

AUTO LIEN SALE AUCTION

3111 E. Willow Street
Long Beach, CA 90806
(562) 570-2828
<http://www.longbeach.gov/finance/services-and-permits/towing-and-lien-sales/auktion/>
Feb. 15 & Mar. 1, 2022
Registration & Viewing Hours:
8:00 A.M. – 9:50 A.M.

Ports of LA, Shanghai announced first trans-Pacific green shipping corridor

BY BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

The ports of Los Angeles and Shanghai, in partnership with the C40 Cities and other stakeholders, announced a new partnership to establish the first green shipping corridor in the world.

The partnership will create a first-of-its-kind corridor between the U.S. and China—one of the busiest container routes in the world. The group is slated to unveil its “Green Shipping Corridor Implementation Plan” by the end of the year, including deliverables, milestones and roles.

The main goal of the partnership is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for goods movement between the largest ports in the U.S. and China.

“International collaboration is essential to decarbonize global supply chains,” Port of LA Executive Director Gene Seroka said in a statement.

Key goals of the partnership include: • Phasing in low, ultra-low and zero carbon fueled ships throughout the 2020s, followed by the world’s first zero-carbon trans-Pacific container ships to be introduced by 2030.

• Developing best management practices to reduce emissions and improve efficiency.

• Reducing supply chain emissions from port operations and improving air quality in adjacent communities.

“We applaud this effort,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero told the Business Journal.

“We’ve made tremendous progress cleaning up our operations, and as our partners at the Port of Los Angeles know, a lot of it is about setting an example for the industry.”

While the Long Beach port is not officially a partner in the new initiative, Cordero noted that the green corridor is complementary to the San Pedro Bay ports’ joint effort to reduce emissions. In 2007, the ports adopted their Clean Air Action Plan, which outlined steps toward reducing emissions to 80% of 1990 levels by 2050.

Additionally, the partnership builds on large-scale environmental efforts such as the World Ports Climate Action Program, an international commitment to develop projects to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement, Cordero said.

Shippers Maersk, CMA CGM and COSCO also are partners in the new initiative, along with the Aspen Institute’s Shipping Decarbonization Initiative, facilitators of Cargo Owners for Zero Emission Vessels and the Maritime Technology Cooperation Centre in Asia.

“Accelerating efforts to decarbonize the shipping sector is urgent if we are to limit global heating to 1.5 degrees,” Mark Watts, executive director of C40 Cities, said in a statement. “By convening international coalitions of the willing and creating a scalable and replicable model for other cities to follow we hope this ground-breaking green shipping corridor initiative will catalyze action on a global scale.” ■

Dine Out restaurant week returns for 7th run

BY CHEANTAY JENSEN / Reporter

Back for its seventh year, Dine Out Long Beach, Restaurant & Cocktail week will kick off Friday, Feb. 18, enticing locals to indulge in (and support) Long Beach’s gastronomical landscape with restaurants all over the city offering special menus, pairings and promotions.

The 10-day event, which ends Feb. 28, boasts 45 participating restaurants (and counting) including newcomers El Barrio Cantina on the Fourth Street Corridor, Rosemallows in Downtown, Saltwater Deck in Junipero Beach and Liv’s on Second. Zaferia District’s Colombian fire grill restaurant, Selva, which opened Feb. 2, will also be participating.

Some familiar staples this year include The Ordinarie, Michael’s on Naples, Lola’s, La Tarantella Osteria Italiana, Bamboo Club and more.

“It’s been another challenging year for our culinary community,” said Elizabeth Borsting, founder and organizer of Dine Out Long Beach, in a statement. “But we are confident that foodies, oenophiles, and friends, in general, will come out to support our restaurant owners, chefs, bartenders and sommeliers during Restaurant & Cocktail Week.”

The promotions vary from restaurant to restaurant. Some offer prix fixe menus, meals for two, chef’s tasting menus or

multi-course options for breakfast, lunch or dinner—often highlighting some of their best offerings at a discount or new meals entirely. Others offer small plates, wine, beer and cocktail pairings.

There are no registration fees, all you need to do is visit the participating restaurant and request the Dine Out Long Beach menu or promotions. For diners preferring to eat at home, there are participating restaurants with options for take-out as well as beer, wine and cocktails to-go.

Returning again this year is Dine Out Long Beach’s “Imaginary Menu,” a campaign created last year in response to the hardships dining and drinking establishments experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Guests are invited to donate \$3 or more toward their bill for imaginary food items such as “imaginary breadsticks” or “imaginary nachos” that will directly benefit Restaurants Care, a non-profit organization of the California Restaurants Association that provides financial relief to restaurant owners and/ or workers in need.

So far, the nonprofit has helped Long Beach restaurants The Reef, Russellcock Beer Garden, Panxa Cocina, Ola Mexican Kitchen and Jade on the Water.

Dine Out Long Beach, Restaurant & Cocktail week is Feb. 18-28. Learn more at dineoutlongbeach.com. ■



A biker rides past the Alamitos Bay Marina parking lot in Southeast Long Beach Thursday, Jan. 20, 2022. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

Commission won’t support paid parking at Alamitos Bay Marina

BY JASON RUIZ / Reporter

The Long Beach Marine Advisory Commission indicated late last month that it would not recommend installing paid parking meters at Alamitos Bay Marina to the City Council.

Commissioners worked on Jan. 27 to craft a letter to send to the council that detailed why it thinks a recommendation from a city-hired consultant to add paid parking is not justified. A formal recommendation could come after the commission’s Feb. 10 meeting.

Commissioner Bruce Mac Rae read the letter compiled by the commission’s ad hoc committee dealing with the paid parking issue in the lots that wrap around the marina from Alamitos Bay Landing to Second Street.

Mac Rae said there are a number of concerns expressed by boat owners and businesses in the marina, including how the shift to paid parking could negatively affect those that use the marina regularly, existing leases that provide for free parking, and the neighboring 2ND & PCH shopping center that many have said is the source of any perceived parking problem.

“Sudden shifts increasing the costs to their customers and employees could result in a repeat of the 2ND & PCH parking problem, displaced to nearby residential areas in Seal Beach and Long Beach where parking is free,” Mac Rae said.

The letter indicated that commissioners believe the conclusion reached by the city’s consultant was done with incomplete or misleading data to support the need for paid parking. Mac Rae noted that only two days of surveying were done during the fall, a time of the year when boat owners are less active, and before a lot of the businesses that exist today were fully online.

Like other commissions, the Marine

Advisory Commission serves an advisory role to the City Council, which has the final say.

The 2ND & PCH development opened in October 2019 and replaced the Seaport Marina Hotel, which had occupied the corner since the early 1960s.

While the center has its own parking structure and offers validation for those staying for less than 90 minutes, it charges \$2 every 20 minutes and a \$30 maximum to park there.

Those opposed to putting paid parking meters in the Alamitos Bay Marina parking lot say the paid lots at the shopping center have led to customers and employees parking in the marina lots for free, but this is not something that has led to a shortage of parking in the vast marina parking lots.

“I don’t feel as a boat owner that we need parking meters,” said boat owner Lanny Vilensky. “There’s only one person who benefits from paid parking—it’s the people who build them and maintain them.”

Boat owners also believe that they already pay for parking through their slip fees that pay back the \$114 million in bonds that were issued in 2015 to fund improvements to the marina. Slip fees can be as high as \$3,600 per month.

If the council ultimately decides to go forward with a paid parking program, boat owners are hopeful that an appeal to the California Coastal Commission, the entity that governs the state’s coastline and any developments on it, would ultimately block it to preserve free public access to the coast.

The final wording of the draft letter could change before it’s sent to the City Council, but the commission was resolute in its stance that paid parking meters are not something they support.

“We’re making a statement,” Mac Rae said. “This is not good and we’re not happy.” ■

City to seek bond funding for new Civic Center residential development

BY ANTHONY PIGNATARO / Reporter

The Long Beach City Council last week unanimously approved a plan to use tax-exempt bonds to pay for the purchase and development of 580 residential units on the “Midblock” site at the Civic Center.

Under the plan, the City Council will enter into an agreement where the California Community Housing Agency would issue \$490 million in tax-exempt bonds to buy the land and develop the Midblock site.

Though City Manager Tom Modica called the financing mechanism “really complex” and “something new for us,” the council ultimately agreed to the plan without any amendments or modifications.

Under the plan, a joint powers authority formed by state and local governments would own the new project while Plenary, the landowner, would manage it.

The property management company Greystar would then manage the two 290-unit buildings, which will include ground-floor retail space. Once those units are filled, the rent they generate would cover the bonds and any other fees and taxes that need to be paid.

The financial structure is intended to shield the city from any liability for the bonds while providing financing for Plenary to build the project. However, deals like this have proven to be risky because they depend on economic stability for decades; in this case, the 40-year lifespan of the bonds being repaid by rent.

The city would receive its portion of property taxes from the development in the form of an annual \$650,000 “host fee,” which city officials say will not be passed on to renters.

Developing the Midblock has been on hold as Plenary has failed to find someone to buy the property and develop the project’s two-building residential centerpiece.

While Councilwoman Suzie Price questioned staff on the risk associated with the deal, Development Services Director Oscar Orci told her the joint authority, and not the city, would assume all the risk.

Nonetheless, an analysis by a city-

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Federal Trade Commission extends deadline for comment on supply chain disruptions

BY BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

As grocery and retail shelves across the nation lay bare, the Federal Trade Commission has given an extension to nine large businesses that were ordered to provide insights regarding the ongoing supply chain crisis.

In November, the commission ordered Walmart, Amazon, Kroger, C&S Wholesale Grocers, Associated Wholesale Grocers, McLane Co., Proctor and Gamble Co., Tyson Foods and Kraft Heinz Co. to provide detailed information to shed light on the causes of supply chain disruptions and their impacts.

The original deadline was Jan. 29, but that has been extended to Feb. 28 at the request of the companies, the commission announced.

“Supply chain disruptions are upending the provision and delivery of a wide array of goods, ranging from computer chips and medicines to meat and lumber,” commission Chair Lina Khan said in November. “I am hopeful the FTC’s new study will shed light on market conditions and business practices that may have worsened these disruptions

or led to asymmetric effects.”

The impacts of the supply chain crisis have been apparent at the port of Long Beach and Los Angeles—at one point, dozens of ships were anchored just off the coast, awaiting their turns at dock. The twin ports have taken various steps to alleviate backlogs on their end, with some success resulting in a record amount of cargo handled last year.

Despite their best efforts, the backlog persists, with over 100 ships waiting their turn as of Thursday, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California. Of those ships, 95% are anchored or slow steaming more than 25 miles off the coast.

The commission issued its orders under Section 6(b) of the FTC Act, which allows the body to conduct studies that do not have a specific law enforcement purpose. The commission hopes to alleviate “serious and ongoing hardships” facing consumers and maintain competition within the U.S. economy as a result of the study, the original announcement states.

Additionally, the commission will examine if the disruptions are leading to specific bottlenecks, shortages,

anticompetitive practices or contributing to rising consumer costs.

The nine companies are required to provide details as well as internal documents related to:

- Their ability to obtain, transport and distribute products;
- Delayed and canceled orders as a result of disruptions;
- Increased costs and prices;
- Which products and suppliers are most affected;
- Steps they are taking to alleviate disruptions; and
- How they allocate products among stores amid the shortages.

In addition to the official orders, the agency is soliciting voluntary comments from consumers, retailers, suppliers and wholesalers on how the supply chain crisis is affecting competition in consumer goods markets.

“The FTC has a long history of pursuing market studies to deepen our understanding of economic conditions and business conduct,” Khan said previously, “and we should continue to make nimble and timely use of these information-gathering tools and authorities.” ■



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Ivan Castellanos, 39, and his family work at the front stand to prepare strawberries packs for customers at the renamed “Santa Fe Strawberries” in West Long Beach on Saturday, Jan. 22, 2022. Photo by Crystal Niebla.



Rigoberto Ramirez Jr. visits his family's past strawberry field in West Long Beach on Jan. 22, 2022. Photo by Crystal Niebla.

City Mandate

Continued from page 18

“Things are always changing,” said Pritchard, adding that the city should be following the state’s lead. “That should be the policy of the city.”

Rich Chambers, president of the Long Beach Police Officers Association, said his organization is still meeting regularly with the city manager on the proposed mandate. He said the current testing protocol for employees is working, and a mandate is unnecessary.

“The testing protocol in use right now has shown its effectiveness,” said Chambers. “Officers who test positive are identified and isolated from the public. It is working to keep the community and our employees safe.”

Data released by the city manager’s office last month show that 84% of city employees as a whole are vaccinated, though vaccination rates vary widely among the various city departments, with police and fire having the lowest rates in the city.

Among the larger departments, Health & Human Services (583 employees) and Parks & Recreation

(719 employees) have vaccination rates of 97% and 95%, respectively, while fire (696 employees) and police (1,032 employees) have far lower vaccination rates of 78% and 68%, respectively, according to the city manager’s latest figures, released in late December 2021.

If and when a mandate does go into effect, neither Pritchard nor Chambers mentioned the possibility of a lawsuit, like the one that was filed in Los Angeles by 13 police officers who said that city’s vaccination mandate violated their constitutional rights. On Jan. 10, a federal judge threw out the suit.

“This is not a court fight, in my opinion,” said Pritchard. Instead, implementing a mandate means the city would risk losing firefighters, especially those close to retirement. In fact, he said, the department recently lost five or six to neighboring counties with “more laxed” vaccination policies.

Chambers agreed. “I predict we will be engaged in discussions about where reductions will be made, which assignments will have less or maybe no officers, and what services will be impacted” if the mandate goes through, he said. “I truly hope that doesn’t happen.” ■

Westside’s strawberry ranch is back in business under new local family ownership

BY CRYSTAL NIEBLA / Reporter

After being closed for several months, the strawberry ranch in West Long Beach is back in business under a new local family who will continue the decades-long legacy of selling juicy and sweet strawberries on Santa Fe Avenue.

The family that ran the well-known Ramirez Strawberry Ranch shut it down at the end of May after its patriarch, 85-year-old Rigoberto Ramirez Sr., died from a COVID-19-related illness in February. His son, Stanton Councilman Rigoberto Ramirez Jr., temporarily took over the business but later decided to close in order to prioritize caring for his 78-year-old mother, who developed long-term health conditions after surviving a COVID-19 infection.

Ramirez, 53, wanted to make sure that the land, which was leased from Southern California Edison, would continue to be used for agricultural purposes after the business closure. The community, he said, echoed the same desire.

After months of negotiations with Edison, Ramirez found a suitor: one of his father’s workers.

Leonides Castellanos, 58, had been picking strawberries for the Ramirez family for about seven years and had observed the production process, he

said. Castellanos said taking over was a quick decision because there was the opportunity to continue planting for this year.

“The community spoke for this, and we made it happen,” Ramirez said. “I know that the community is very good at supporting local, and I hope that’s the case here moving forward.”

Originally from Oaxaca, Mexico, Castellanos said he had gained experience in this industry while helping his father and supporting his 10 siblings as Castellanos didn’t go to school. Now living in Carson, he continues his love for the field.

“I’ve really liked agriculture,” Castellanos said in Spanish.

While Castellanos renamed the business “Santa Fe Strawberries,” he’s following the same growing methods to keep the strawberries tasting like before. Aside from strawberries, the Ramirez family grew fava beans, and now the Castellanos family have added passion fruit to the ranch.

On a Saturday morning last month, some customers lined up for the iconic berries. Ten-year-old Ruth Castellanos, the Castellanos’ granddaughter, packaged strawberries for them. Her favorite part of helping her family with the new strawberry business, she said, was “eating them.”

Santa Fe Strawberries is at 3511 Santa Fe Ave. ■

Civic Center Bonds

Continued from page 21

hired consultant noted that the deal’s bonds, which span 45 years, still carries risks “because it is highly sensitive to market conditions.”

“Small variations to the current assumptions of rent growth and vacancy have the potential to dramatically reduce—or increase—the surplus sale proceeds,” the analysis said.

Councilwoman Mary Zendejas said she was “really excited about the project” because of all the affordable housing it would bring.

Though the city promotes the project as being 100% affordable, nearly 80% of the rents would be based on Tax Credit Allocation Committee income limits, which have significantly higher qualifying income for a two-person household (\$94,600) than state limits (\$64,000).

The lower monthly rents will be reserved exclusively for studios (\$1,442) and one-bedroom units (\$1,655) while units using the TCAC median income limits will cost significantly more, according to an analysis provided to the city.

A one-bedroom unit will cost \$2,460 per month with two-bedroom (\$3,063) and three-bedroom (\$3,389) units coming in under market value but more than some of the Oceanaire units, which have been criticized for not being affordable.

Because of the differing rent structures, only 120 out of the 580 units will count toward the city’s Regional Housing Needs Assessment goal of creating 4,158 moderate-income units over the next eight years.

The city could eventually force a sale of the building at any time after year 15, with a likely scenario being at year 40, according to the analysis.

Sale of the building could bring between \$385 million and \$315 million, not accounting for the \$137.7 million in property taxes owed to other agencies, which city officials plan to make whole after the sale of the building.

When Councilman Daryl Supernaw asked if such a sale could lead to a sharp rise in rents, Orci said that deed restrictions in the property would keep rents from rising to market rates. Though the deal lacks a formal enforcement mechanism, he said, the city would monitor the property each year. ■



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