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STATE OF THE PORTS

The backlog of ships and trade war with China continue to drag on. What is happening, and will port operations ever return to normal?

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By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

Port of Long Beach purchases 29 acres of privately owned land on Pier D

The Port of Long Beach is expansive, made up of 5,320 acres of land and 4,660 acres of water with 10 piers and 80 berths. The city’s port authority, however, does not own all of this area, with dozens of acres owned by private companies.

But it appears port officials are looking to change that.

In September, the port announced the purchase of 28.6 acres—about 25% of which is submerged—in the heart of the Harbor District. The waterfront site is made up of three parcels on the north end of Pier D and is currently owned by Sioux Falls-based building materials production and bulk cargo transportation company L.G. Everist Inc.

The port has agreed to pay more than $65.5 million for the property, which includes a heavy cargo boat ramp used primarily for unloading large rocks and other dry bulk construction materials, according to the announcement.

Once the transaction is complete, the port will take over the leases of the seven tenants that operate on that portion of Pier D. Tenants include Sause Brothers, Connolly Pacific, SBA Communications, Gamblin Industries, Polaris Mineral, Robertson’s Ready Mix and Subsea Global Solutions.

“We’re going to maintain the status quo in terms of the operations of those businesses, and we’re going to support them,” Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said. “In the long term, it is another opportunity for the port authority to have land at our disposal.”

Combined, the leases are expected to bring in $5.5 million in revenue annually, according to port officials.

Assuming the purchase is completed, there will still be more than 60 acres of privately owned land within the Harbor District, including the Valero refinery, according to port spokesperson Lee Peterson. Plains All American’s fossil fuel tank farm and NBG’s power plant occupy 45 acres on Terminal Island, and the Craig family trust owns 14 acres on Pier D.

In the North Harbor area, there are 29 smaller parcels with 25 different owners, but port staff does not have an exact acreage available, Peterson said. L.G. Everist has owned the property for about five decades, having purchased it from Craig Shipyard, according to the announcement.

“We certainly want to take advantage of opportunities that are available to us,” Cordero said, “because we are learning more and more how important land availability is to the port.”

Long Beach, Los Angeles ports work toward 24/7 operations

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

During a press conference from the East Room of the White House last week, President Joe Biden announced the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles have transitioned to 24/7 operations as a means to alleviate the severe bottleneck at the Southern California ports.

But it appears the president spoke too soon.

While the ports are indeed working to speed up the flow of goods, the reality is that it will take time for the busiest port complex in the country to significantly ramp up cargo movement, port officials said after the speech, adding that no terminal operates 24/7.

“It’s a bit of a process, it’s not an overnight thing,” Port of Long Beach spokesman Lee Peterson said in a phone call following the president’s remarks.

During his comments, Biden repeated a claim made earlier in the day by Press Secretary Jen Psaki that the Port of Long Beach began 24/7 operations “weeks ago.” However, no terminal at the Long Beach port currently offers 24/7 operations.

On Sept. 21, four days after the San Pedro Bay port announced a joint move toward 24/7 operations, Long Beach unveiled a pilot program in which Total Terminal International container terminal on Pier T would expand hours of operations. Monday
By ALENA MASCHKE / Reporter

New law takes aim at “bad actors” in trucking—and the companies using their services

By ALENA MASCHKE / Reporter

Big box retailers moving product through California will soon have to take a closer look at the company they keep—or pay the price.

A state Senate bill recently signed into law by Gov. Gavin Newsom spots the process for companies who have been found to be misclassified drivers to be added to a state blacklist, and place additional liability on customers—largely retailers—who continue to use their services.

The list, which is compiled and published by the state’s Department of Industrial Relations, includes the names and addresses of port drayage companies that have not paid judgments issued against them for labor law violations, such as unpaid wages resulting from the misclassification of drivers as independent contractors.

Customers using trucking companies on the list already shared liability for these judgments—meaning they could be held financially liable by a worker who, for example, had made a successful wage theft claim that remained unpaid. Under the new law, trucking companies’ customers can also be held liable for misclassifying drivers to the state, such as unpaid state employment assessments.

The bill’s author, current state senator and former Long Beach councilwoman Lena Gonzalez, said the new law marks an important step in the fight against the misclassification and mischaracterization of truckers who transport goods to and from the ports of Long Beach and L.A.

“Due to record cargo volumes coming into the ports and retailers seeing their revenues surge during the pandemic, Gonzalez said drivers aren’t reaping the benefits of that increased economic activity, in large part because many remain misclassified as independent contractors,” the bill’s author said.

“The port is making astronomical numbers,” Gonzalez said. “You see all that, and then you still see all of these truck drivers in poverty.”

Repeat offenders—trucking companies that have previous unpaid judgments against them—will now be added to the state’s blacklist, even if their period for judicial appeals hasn’t expired yet, meaning new offenders will be visible to potential customers within weeks, rather than months or years.

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CATALINA EXPRESS

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CATALINA EXPRESS

 targeting accountability if they work with trucking companies that misclassify their drivers. Photo by Brandon Richardson.

A lot of California Gov. Gavin Newsom recently signed into law will hold big box retailers such as Target accountable for trucking companies that misclassify their drivers.
‘Decade of underinvestment’: San Pedro Bay port executives call for systemic change in supply chain

By BRANDON RICHARDSON / Reporter

Congestion at the San Pedro Bay port terminals shows no sign of easing, more than one year after a record-setting cargo surge began amid the COVID-19 pandemic, port officials say.

For months, a backlog of ships has been anchored off the Southern California coast waiting for space to open up at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. The number of ships waiting off the coast reached a new record on Sept. 20, when 50 were at anchor or adrift, according to the Marine Exchange of Southern California.

goods movement delays, though, are not unique to the San Pedro Bay ports. “This is a global supply chain issue,” Port of LA Executive Director Gene Seroka said in a statement. “After weeks of negotiations and months of discussions, we are pleasantly surprised by the move to round-the-clock operations.”

Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement. “We are encouraged by the move to round-the-clock operations,”

24/7 Operations

Continued from page 3

through Thursday, the terminal operates around the clock. Hours on other days of operation remain limited. No other terminal at Long Beach has announced any 24-hour operations, Peterson confirmed.

“After weeks of negotiations and working with our team and with the major union retailers and freight movers, the Port of Los Angeles announced today that it’s going to begin operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” Cordero said during his speech.

The operational details of transitioning to a 24/7 model are still being discussed and worked out, Port of LA Executive Director Gene Seroka said in an email after Biden’s remarks. The port did announce expanded hours on Sept. 17, but systemic change of this magnitude takes the many branches of the supply chain to work in tandem, a point that Biden acknowledged in his speech.

“The significance of today’s announcement is the commitment from industry leaders responsible for moving goods on behalf of American consumers and businesses to open up the capacity needed to deliver,” Seroka said. “It’s a call to action for others to follow.”

Port of Long Beach Executive Director Mario Cordero, meanwhile acknowledged the importance of moving toward 24/7 operations.

“Before this unprecedented cargo surge began, we believed the Port of LA’s commitment to round-the-clock operations was the future,” Cordero said in a statement. “After all, consumers can shop online at any time, whether it’s 4 a.m. or 4 a.m., and 24/7 is already the standard at our partner ports in Asia. The supply chain

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truly never stops now.”

Biden announced that Walmart, the nation’s largest retailer, has committed to going “all in” on moving its products 24/7. In the coming weeks, Walmart is expected to increase peak hour goods movement by 50%, Biden said.

Target, Home Depot and Samsung have made similar commitments, Biden added.

FedEx and UPS, which combined move 40% of packages, are also on board with the move to round-the-clock goods movement at all levels—corporate, small business and individual—Seroka said.

“Their commitment to go all in on 24/7 operations means businesses of all sizes will get their goods on sale faster and more reliably,” Biden said. “It’s a sign of major progress.”

When the Port of LA does successfully transition to 24/7 operations, the facility will be open an additional 60 hours per week, Biden said. With nearly double the number of operational hours, Biden said cargo will leave the port 23% faster.

Biden used his speech as an opportunity to promote his landmark infrastructure bill, which has been signed into law for months. The bill includes $17 billion for port infrastructure, representing the “biggest investment in our ports in our history,” according to Biden.

In an Oct. 8 interview, Seroka said Port of Long Beach, which would allow ships to turn to dock.

Biden acknowledged in his speech. “But now we need the rest of the private sector chain to step up as well.”

“We’ve seen the cost of inaction.”

A petroleum ship makes its way under the new Long Beach International Gateway bridge at the Port of Long Beach Monday, October 11, 2021. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova.

A Walmart truck crosses the Long Beach International Gateway bridge onto the 710 Freeway Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021. Walmart, the nation’s largest retailer, committed to increased off-peak hour cargo movement as part of a larger push to alleviate congestion at the San Pedro Bay ports. Photo by Brandon Richardson.
FROM THE EDITOR: Could the current shipping woes have been avoided?

BY HAYLEY MUNOZA / Editor

It’s an understatement to say the San Pedro Bay Ports—along with trade hubs elsewhere across the country and the world—have been in the spotlight lately. Cargo backlogs have dominated headlines for months, taking the blame for a shortage of goods, inflated prices and now the possibility that holiday gifts won’t be delivered on time.

The persistence of shipping woes during the COVID-19 pandemic has made me wonder whether any of this was avoidable.

As my colleague Brandon Richardson reported in the cover story of this edition, the Port of Los Angeles’ executive director Gene Sokoloski believes that if the federal government had sufficiently invested in the West Coast ports in recent years, “you wouldn’t see [dozens] of ships waiting just off shore.”

But there’s no such thing as a port job on that front. So my next question was: how have the ports been investing their own money, along with funds they receive from the federal government and other agencies?

I talked to the Port of Los Angeles’ deputy executive director of development, Tony Gioiello, and the Port of Long Beach’s managing director of engineering, Brian Gamette, to get a sense of their major projects and how they’ll benefit the region and the shipping industry as a whole in the years ahead.

When asked what they see as the most significant capital improvement projects currently underway at their ports, both Gioiello and Gamette spoke first about rail work. While many folks may think the current backlog comes down to the ports’ ability to unload ships, every link in the supply chain has been inundated—meaning rail, which connects them all, must be addressed.

And the twin ports, Gioiello and Gamette say, are working to do just that.

In Los Angeles, there’s the $37 million plan to add new railroad tracks on Terminal Island and the $52 million rail yard expansion at Berth 202, which will increase its capacity by about 10%.

And in Long Beach, a $31 million project will add another departure track for trains from Pier G to G, a $25 million dedicated to adding 1,000 feet of track to eliminate a bottleneck at Ocean Boulevard, and $48 million is going toward plans to add about 30,000 feet of track to the bay on Terminal Island, which is a critical junction for the port.

That’s not to mention the Port of Long Beach’s $20 million project to redevelop the Pier B railyard, which aids in redirecting cargo movement from trucks to trains.

“Don’t have a strategic focus on rail,” Gamette said. “We can move cargo more efficiently by rail, and we can do it in a more environmentally friendly way, right? In 2020, we moved about 1.6 million TEUs [20-foot equivalent units] on by-dock rail, but we forecast that by 2024, we might be moving to about 2.9 million TEUs by rail.”

Gamette said the Pier B project alone acknowledged the need for infrastructure investment—with a particular focus on investment in ports—in a speech last week.

He pointed that the infrastructure bill currently sitting in Congress, which includes $17 billion for port infrastructure, “represents the largest investment in ports in our history.”

But Gioiello said changes to how the federal government approves grants for the ports also need to be made.

“It’s very competitive to get these federal funds right now,” he said. “We have found out that sometimes the criteria they’re using to judge projects—maybe they need to be updated.”

As an example, Gioiello pointed to a terminal electrification project:

“We’re looking at great opportunities—federal grants—for that project, and even though it’s a great environmental project and would have great benefits, the project itself was not increasing cargo through that terminal.”

So “the way that grant criteria are written, we’re not going to be competitive on that.”

Still, Gioiello said the availability of federal funding doesn’t dictate which projects the port pursues. If specific work is necessary, the port will fund the project on its own if it must.

And another, he said, “we decided long ago we’re not going to do a project just because there’s that much money out there.”

But the question still exists: If the West Coast ports had more investment in recent years, would they be better equipped to handle the current surge? That’s a question we may never be able to answer. And as Gamette told me, “I don’t know that anybody could have forecast the type of surge we’re experiencing.”

But, in the ports’ case, there are some investments they’ve made that could have been an even worse crisis.

The new Long Beach International Gateway, for example, is wider and taller than its predecessor, the Gerald Desmond Bridge, allowing bigger ships to travel underneath and carry traffic flow for tracks carrying cargo across it.

“A brand new bridge during this surge is a big help,” Gamette said. “The new bridge is certainly helping with track traffic flow, alleviating peak points.”

And while the bridge and other work has helped mitigate the impact of the current surge, both port representatives said the agencies are indeed working now to overcome the challenges they may face a decade or more down the line.

“I could be more proud to work for an organization that has got the long-term outlook, on capital infrastructure that the Port of Long Beach does,” Gamette said.

“Whenever we talk about our long-range plan, we look out 10 years, and we’re thinking about looking out 20 years or more down the line.”

“We’re planning on that kind of horizon, and what that does is allow us to put things in service that take a while to build,” he added. “All of them are going to increase the efficiency of cargo movement, so they will have an impact.”

But, as we’re seeing even now this year and a half, Gamette acknowledged, “they’re not things that are done overnight.”

When asked about what they see as the main obstacles to port efficiency overall, both port leaders said they are those types of investments—like terminal movement or new railroad storage tracks—which ports need to be made.

“For the west coast, especially, there are some kinds of projects and the efficiency of goods movement overall. But he also said other types of infrastructure, like personal improvements and enhancing public access, could also be critical.

When it comes to funding, though, Gioiello agreed with his boss that the federal government’s capital programs are supportive of these major projects.

President Joe Biden, for his part, extended, local companies supplying and delivering everything from electronics to provisions have also been flourishing.

Esquiviel Perez, co-founder of Long Beach-based Xpress Box, said his company’s business has increased by 20% during the pandemic. Computer,Xpress Box sells and rents technical equipment like phones and routers to seafarers.

“The first thing they need is the SIM card,” Perez said. “They’re desperate to get it, because they need to communicate with their family.” Computer Xpress fulfillment averages an average of 15 orders per week. Perez estimated, with each order containing items for several crew members on the same ship.

Requests for deliveries to ships anchored in the bay also increased, according to Joel Flores, vice president of San Pedro-based U.S. Water Taxi, which transports provisions orders to anchored vessels.

“They need to live off of something,” Flores said of the crew members, whose ships are often stuck just off the coast for days as a result of port congestion, running short on milk, eggs and fresh vegetables.

Flores has spent three decades running boats between the port of Los Angeles and ships at sea, but the current situation is unprecedented, he said. “I’ve never seen it like this before.”

Two bridges over, at the Seafarer’s Center, Petitjean keeps busy too, ferrying U.S. sailors to grocery stores for their own specialty provisions or to the airport for their trip home. Soon, she hopes, she’ll be able to do the same for foreign seafarers once again.

I think, then, she sympathizes out to the sailors stuck at sea.

“I feel so sorry for them,” Petitjean said. “It’s like they’re in prison.”

New Law

Continued from page 4

“It’s really the megaregions of them all,” Gonzalez said. “We need to make sure that these people are put on the list as soon as possible.”

After initially opposing the bill, both the California Trucking Association and the California Retailers Association, the two advocacy groups representing major stakeholders on this issue, both took a neutral stance on the new law.

“We were happy to work with Senator Gonzalez to ensure the bill focused on those who walk away from obligations—to pay duly owed wage claims,” Chris Shimoda, senior vice president of the California Retailers Association. Both organizations declined further comment.

The Teamsters, whose port division represents truck drivers, big boat operators, ship-builders and other workers at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, has supported the bill.

“SB 338 will put California on the path to best practices in consumer law that truly protects our essential truck drivers,” Teamsters Port Division Director Ron Herrera said in a written statement. “This new law will give retailers the information they need to avoid working with those same law-breaking companies.”

Repeat offenders, as well as retailers who use port drayage companies with known previous labor law violations, are known speciality provisions or to the airport for their trip home. Soon, she hopes, she’ll be able to do the same for foreign seafarers once again. Until then, then, she sympathizes out to the sailors stuck at sea.

“I feel so sorry for them,” Petitjean said. “It’s like they’re in prison.”

The bill is part of a larger body of legislation trying to affect change in the trucking industry in recent years, much of which has focused on the appropriate classification of truckers as either independent contractors or employees.

One of the most impactful pieces of legislation on this issue: Assemblymember Lorenita Gonzalez’s Assembly Bill 5, tightened the requirements that workers—including truck drivers—had to meet to be considered independent contractors in the state of California.

AB 5 officially took effect on January 1, 2020, but has faced continued court challenges, including one from the California Trucking Association, which is currently seeking review by the U.S. Supreme Court.

A year after AB 5 passed, Ricardo Lara, the state’s current insurance commissioner and Lena Gonzalez’s predecessor in the state Senate, authored a bill that established the list of trucking companies that had yet to pay judgments against them for unpaid wages.

Lena Gonzalez, whose father worked as a truck driver, said she will continue to legislate on the issue of trucker misclassification at the ports.

“We need to continue to push,” she said, “to ensure that we’re correcting these issues.”

Port truckers awarded $30 million in misclassification settlements

A group of port truckers have been awarded nearly $30 million in a settlement with one of the world’s largest port trucking companies, XPO Logistics, following a court battle that lasted over three years.

In two separate lawsuits, one against Rancho Dominguez-based subsidiary XPO Port Services and one against XPO Logistics Cartage in Commerce and San Diego, hundreds of drivers alleged that they were misclassified as independent contractors by the port trucking companies.

Of the total $29.5 million XPO Logistics agreed to pay as part of the settlement, roughly $19 million will go directly to the qualifying truckers—a group of nearly 800 drivers—with the majority of the remaining funds going to their legal counsel.

All parties represented their content with the outcome of the court case: “With the legal and regulatory landscape in California evolving, we reached a settlement on terms that are favorable for XPO and should put this matter behind us,” a spokesperson for the company said via email.

The statement refers to a series of state laws passed in recent years that set strict conditions on when companies can classify workers as independent contractors, like painted trucks and warehouse employees of port drayage companies—for many of these large yards—poorly laden for wage violations resulting from misclassification.

Although the settlement amount represents only a fraction of the damages sought by the drivers, the group suing XPO Port Services considered the outcome a “stellar result,” according to court documents.

As part of the settlement, XPO Logistics won’t have to re-classify its current drivers included in the lawsuit as employees. Still, the Teamsters, whose port and drayage divisions represent truck drivers, applauded the settlement.

“Today’s victory makes clear to other misclassified drivers that the days of misclassification misadventures are over,” said the division’s director, Ron Herrerra, said in a written statement. “To employers, these are the times to take note of the clear reminder that deprecating workers of their wages and shortchanging them with shoddy essential job protections is unacceptable, and vigilant drivers are to be honored.”

The settlements are set for final approval on December 18.

Deepening Channels

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which analyzed five potential paths forward—including leaving the port channels as they are—and recommended a plan that would:

1. Deepen the Approach Channel to 80 feet and the West Basin Channel, Pier J Basin and berths to 75 feet.
2. Build a Pier J Approach Channel, a turning basin outside of Pier J South and a new dredge electric substation at Pier J South;
3. East-bend in the Main Channel and make improvements to the Pier J Breakwaters.

The project and its associated costs, the report found, would total roughly $16.5 million, with the federal government paying $5.6 million and the Port of Long Beach funding the rest. Over 50 years, though, the report said costs would amount to about $35 million annually—but generate $21 million each year.

Representatives for the Army Corps did not respond to a request for comment.

In the short term, Seroka said port authorities have

Deepening Channels

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Last year, the Port of Long Beach moved just over 8.1 million TEUs, breaking its single-year record set in 2018 by about 20,000 TEUs. The Port of L.A., meanwhile, moved 9.2 million TEUs, its fourth-highest volume in a single year.

This year, the ports are on track to surpass 25 million TEUs, according to Cordova, who said he would not be surprised to see 10 million TEUs pass through Long Beach. By 2040, the ports could be processing as many as 40 million TEUs, according to Seroka.

For years, the continuous increase in cargo volumes through the San Pedro Bay ports—the busiest port complex in the United States and in the top 10 globally—should have warranted far more investment by the federal government, Seroka said.

“What you see right now outside the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles is more than a decade of underinvestment.” Seroka said, noting that the federal government has invested $1 billion in East Coast and Gulf Coast ports, compared to $1 billion on the West Coast over the last 10 years.

“It would have been difficult to deal with the challenges the San Pedro Bay complex and other ports face. The Biden administration has even gone as far as creating a Supply Chain Disruption Task Force, which includes the two port executives who Seroka is headed by John Porcari, who served as deputy secretary and COO of the Department of Transportation during the Obama administration.

In recent comments for U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, Seroka and Cordova stressed short- and long-term recommendations to ease port congestion in California and across the country. In the short term, Seroka pushed for incentives for improved cargo flow, enhanced digitalization and a $140 billion for port infrastructure, in part toward 24/7 operations in what Cordova calls “the Amazon state of mind.”

“Long-term operations have been expanded with additional days and hours. Seroka said. Day and night productivity is up 50% compared to pre-pandemic figures, and every vessel that calls on the port loads and unloads 13,100 TEUs on average. But despite their best efforts, the ports cannot keep up.

“We have no expectation that this industry is going to move to [24/7] in the short term. But we’re committed to the world and to the shippers that the Port of Long Beach and Port of Los Angeles will extend gate hours,” Cordova said.

“For more than three years we made a case that it takes the entire supply chain and other stakeholders.”

The ship is not just on the terminal operators, but everybody involved in the supply chain.”

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We Were Green Before Green Was A Thing.

Long Beach nonprofit expands to combat human trafficking

By TESS KAZENOFF / Reporter

Brave Global is increasing its efforts to combat human trafficking after receiving a $50,000 donation from the Rainbow Sandals Foundation.

The donation follows the organization’s participation in Sept. 25’s Long Beach Gives event, in which it raised $6,686.

Brave Global began in 2014 as a grassroots effort at Revive Church in Long Beach before officially becoming a nonprofit in 2017. The group’s work has now expanded to a global movement, with 21 chapters across the United States and five in other countries.

The organization continues to expand and is currently developing a leadership academy program in South Africa, with another chapter “blooming” in Australia as well, said Brave Global CEO Miley Waterman.

“We’re just trying to get in every corner of the world that we can, and of course, continue to nurture our chapters here in the United States as well,” Waterman said.

According to Waterman, it is a misconception that exploitation and trafficking only happen in developing countries.

“That’s why we’re so keen on getting into as many spaces, into as many countries, and into as many cities as possible,” Waterman said, “because the fact is that exploitation and trafficking is everywhere. It’s in everybody’s backyard.”

An integral aspect of Brave Global’s mission is targeting those who are more commonly victims of human trafficking: teenage girls who were previously in the foster care system.

As Waterman explained that human trafficking only happens in areas where children lack a support system, along with inconsistent housing, “can really wreak havoc on a young person’s identity, and just understanding their worth and their value.”

According to estimations by the National Foster Youth Institute, 46% of child trafficking victims are current or former foster youth.

While many factors can contribute to increased susceptibility to human trafficking, Waterman explained that the lack of a support system, along with inconsistent housing, “can really wreak havoc on a young person’s identity, and just understanding their worth and their value.”

As a response to this, over the years Brave Global has worked to connect to Long Beach schools, probation officers, Department of Child and Family Services, the Police Department and foster care services to create an empowerment initiative for teenage girls in foster care. Empowerment is “the goal and the solution,” said Waterman.

What first began simply as a youth empowerment event attended by 200 girls in Long Beach has expanded dramatically. Brave Global will hold empowerment events—in its last pre-pandemic in-person event hosted 600 kids.

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3 properties that made up former Beach & Oceanaire Motel in Belmont Shore are set to go on the market

By TIM GROBATY / Columnist

Motels were fun while they lasted. In the years following World War II when automobiles became readily accessible and relatively affordable, families frequently took to the road to visit friends or for vacation, stopping at motels along the way. Major highways favored by motorists, such as Route 66 and Highway 101, were lined with mom-and-pop motels, where you could park directly in front of your room to easily unload the car and keep an eye on it during your stay.

Eventually, motels began to disappear as major interstates were built bypassing the smaller highways and their towns with vacationers taking a preference for hotels with larger rooms, more amenities and easy access to the freeway to continue their journey. According to “No Vacancy: The Rise, Demise, and Reprise of America’s Motels,” in 1964 there were 61,000 motels in the country; by 2012 the number had dwindled to 10,000—and those are divided between kitschy vintage places like Route 66’s Wig Wam Motel in San Bernardino, or run-down places that often get really creepy in reviews online.

One of Long Beach’s more beloved and enduring motels was the Beach & Oceanaire Motel on Ocean Boulevard in Belmont Shore. It was built in 1938 by a Texan named Merle Key Guertin, a direct descendant of a line of shipwrights—of anthem-penner Francis Scott Key. The motel, built in the still-sparsely populated Belmont Shore, was opened in 1938 as a 10-room motel with rates set at $5 a night and was favored by islanders looking to spend a week or two at the seashore, along with Midwesterners seeking some relief from either the bitter winters or punishing summers of their home states.

In 1953, by which time the public’s enthusiasm for motel vacations was in full swing, Guertin put in a swimming pool and added a second floor with an additional 15 rooms. The last expansion came in 1969 when the motel added a building behind the main motel, increasing the occupancy to 30.

Guertin died in 1970 at the age of 79, leaving the operation of the Beach & Oceanaire Motel in the hands of the family of his daughter Ernestine & Oceanaire Motel, which was finally closed, a bit past its prime, in 1991, having lost too many potential customers to the glitter, amenity-packed hotels along Downtown’s Aquatic Center, new concession stands and lifeguard towers and everything else that will be needed for the 2028 Olympics, some of which will take place nearby, like sailing, deep-water swimming and triathlon.

Guertin’s daughter, the late Ernestine Freeman, ran the motel while her husband, John Freeman, ran and operated the hotel. A pair of one-bedroom apartments has been added to the house, making the building a triplex of sorts, though the house is the key feature of this property.

The entire package of properties will be listed soon by Juan Huizar and Caleb Baldwin, of Sage Real Estate and, let’s review. There are the three contiguous properties spanning a block in Belmont Shore, with a total of 10 rentable units, all currently occupied, along, or scant yards away from a vibrant and rapidly improving stretch of Ocean Boulevard.

The planned listing prices, according to Huizar, are $1.775 million for the Bennett Avenue triplex; $1.959 million for the 5-unit Roswell Ave. building; that’s a vestige of the original motel, and $1.526 million for the townhouses at 26 Roswell Ave. They will be for sale separately, but why not collect ‘em all, for a bit more than $5.2 million.

It’s not a far-fetched idea, and both Huizar and Baldwin feel that there’s a good chance they could all get snapped up by one savvy investor.

“Besides the history of the property, I think someone who understands the value of investing in this area with all that’s going on,” said Baldwin, who expects the buyer to be a local investor familiar with Belmont Shore and bullish on its future.

“You’ve got the mayor’s 8 by 28 initiative, which will bring a lot of improvements to the area, including a rebuilt Belmont Pier, the new aquatics center, new concession stands and lifeguard towers and everything else that will be needed for the 2028 Olympics, some of which will take place nearby, like sailing, deep-water swimming and triathlon.

Baldwin predicts that the three-parcel package will be purchased by “an investor who can envision what’s going to be happening down here in just a few years,” and whoever lives—even if it’s the area that once was occupied by the Beach & Oceanaire Motel, will be right in the action.

Plus, it’s just a short walk to Chuck’s Coffee Shop.

$2,050,164 RAISED

THANK YOU!

Over 9,000 donors gave generously to support 2023 nonprofit organizations making a difference in Long Beach.
City Council could vote to allow more cannabis dispensaries early next year

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

Long Beach could soon start allowing additional cannabis dispensaries to operate in the city, but a decision on how and where they’ll be able to operate—and whether the industry will be taxed more—could be months away.

The additional eight dispensary licenses the council is considering creating would be reserved for equity applicants, or those who have historically been economically disenfranchised. New dispensaries would be limited to businesses that have operated within the city for at least three years. City Manager Tom McMichel said that a tax increase was proposed because the extra revenue produced by additional cannabis businesses likely wouldn’t be available for another two to three years.

The city could grant proposed tax changes on a case-by-case basis. Long Beach could also change its code to allow for the creation of additional cannabis businesses through zoning changes.

City Manager Tom McMichel said that a tax increase was proposed because the extra revenue produced by additional cannabis businesses likely wouldn’t be available for another two to three years.

The proposal from city staff suggested raising the tax rate on some cannabis businesses by 25% to offset the startup and operating costs to new businesses. Additional employees to administer the program, something that was opposed by the industry and multiple council members, extended the ordinance on taxes.

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**CITY OF LONG BEACH BILL OPPORTUNITIES**

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### Parts of Grand Prix track to remain in place until May following Council approval

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

Long Beach will allow portions of the Acura Grand Prix of Long Beach track to stay in place until May 2022 after the City Council approved a request from race organizers on Thursday, this month that they say will cut back on setup time and costs.

Race organizers said that leaving more of the track in place until May 2022 would save them about $800,000 of funding as of September.

City Manager Tom Moe said that leaving more of the concrete blocks, which will be east of Pine Avenue, is not expected to interfere with businesses at The Pike on Pine Avenue.

The 2021 race was pushed to late September, as race organizers hoped to host the race during a time of the year where large crowds were allowed to gather without limited restrictions. The race is traditionally held in April, but Los Angeles County had barely entered the “orange” tier of the state’s reopening plan in April, which still disallowed crowds at sporting events. The 2022 race is set for April 9.
First round of City Council district maps is released—and they spell big changes

**By JASON RUIZ / Reporter**

Initial maps of possible new council boundary descriptions show some of the current electoral leaders may be ineligible to run in their districts—a change that could dramatically alter the political landscape in the city.

RedistrictingPartners, the consultant hired to help the Long Beach Independent Redistricting Commission draw new political lines, released 10 potential maps last week. 

Each of the 10 new maps has at least two current council members living in the same district, with one plan creating a situation where there would be two open districts, with no incumbent---that is a single seat that puts both council members live in the same district.

Multiple versions of the maps would have at least two current council members living in the same district, with one plan creating a situation where there would be two open districts, with no incumbent---that is a single seat that puts both council members live in the same district.

Some of the changes that the maps released last week included:

- The 7th District
- The 6th District
- The 4th District
- The 5th District
- The 3rd District
- The 10th District
- The 9th District
- The 8th District
- The 2nd District
- The 1st District

The city’s current electoral boundaries were last updated in 2011, a decade before the last census was taken. Since then, the city’s demographics and population have changed significantly, leading to a need for redistricting.

The released maps are just the first step in the redistricting process. The commission will continue to work on refining the maps, taking public feedback into account, before presenting a final set of recommendations to the City Council for approval.

The City Council has until the end of the year to approve the maps, after which the commission will prepare a final report for the council.

The commission is scheduled to hold public hearings on the maps in early December, with meetings set for December 7 and December 14.

City seeking new contractor for Alamitos Beach concession stand after previous one failed to complete work after more than two years

**By JASON RUIZ / Reporter**

The city could begin looking for a new contractor to complete the $9 million beach concession stand at Alamitos Beach after its current one failed to complete work last week.

Jackie Hickman, manager in the Public Works Business Operations Department, said that the concession stand is about 90% complete, but the construction firm failed to show up for work.

Hickman said some of the bigger issues were the non-completion of the permanent electrical system of the stand as well as the contractor’s inability to get the elevator that will be used to transport guests up to its second floor site finished.

“Requiring proof of vaccination or negative test result is an important step in protecting our community by reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19,” Mayor Robert Garcia said in a Sept. 21 press release.

The LA ordinance expires when the county mandate, which has an outdoor vaccine status.

If mediation does not produce an agreement, the city will be required to make a decision on whether to allow the contractor to complete the project.

The Alamitos Beach concession stand was originally projected to be completed by June 2020, but a number of extensions were granted to the contractor before the city finally declared KCC in default of the contract after its inability to substantially complete the build out. Work started on the project in August 2021.

**State mediator steps in as LBUSD and classified workers remain stuck in raise negotiations

By MIKE GUARDABASCIO / Reporter

A disagreement over raises has driven the Long Beach Unified School District to an impasse with the union that represents over 2,300 of its classified employees, which include maintenance workers, instructional aids, bus drivers, nutrition workers and others.

The local chapter of the California School Employees Association, or CSEA, has been fighting to get a larger raise for its members, but the district has so far resisted—leaving a large gap between the two sides since June when the district announced a 1.7% pay boost.

State mediation between the two parties began last week, but a post on the CSEA website said it didn’t yield any progress.

“The district refused to move on offer to you, the membership, and did not participate in mediation with an open and honest mind,” the CSEA wrote, indicating it would go to mediation.

**Vaccination

By JASON RUIZ / Reporter

The city is a step closer to allowing the contractor to complete the project. The proposed changes that housing costs were likely to cause in the city and for the district.

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Human Trafficking
Continued from page 13
girls and their caregivers. But the group has also developed its own curriculum, interactive journals and virtual programming—the latter as a response to the pandemic.

The organization has also forayed into the world of book publishing, with the recent release of, “Brave in Real Life: Stories From Women Who Have Overcome Sexual Exploitation.”

For Waterman, it has been exciting to expand into publishing, while working with survivors of human trafficking to help tell their stories.

“They want to not wear that victim label, and put on a helper label, and really help other people understand the signs of exploitation and trafficking,” said Waterman.

Perhaps one of Brave Global’s most exciting endeavors has been the Leadership Academy, a six-month intensive virtual program that offers young women mentorship along with skills that will help them with everything from building character to succeeding in their professional lives.

The program is currently recruiting for its second year after a successful launch last year, in which it served 10 people. This year, the academy could accept a maximum of 20 participants, but the goal is to keep the number relatively small, said Waterman.

The program is typically $1,000, but due to Long Beach Gives donations and the recent $30,000 donation from Rainbow Sandals Foundation, Brave Global will be able to offer $500 scholarships to several participants.

In addition to offering scholarships, the funds will be used to “build up our infrastructure, bring on another administrative coordinator, and ramp up our speakers,” said Waterman.

Applications for this year’s leadership program are open until Nov. 20, and participants will be notified of their acceptance by mid-December, with the program beginning on Jan. 17.

View more information about the leadership academy and apply at braveglobal.org, or by emailing academy@braveglobal.org.

Long Beach Gives exceeds goal
The third annual online Long Beach Gives event so far raised $2,050,164, through more than 9,000 donations.

The funds will benefit more than 200 nonprofit organizations.

According to Niko Galvez, Long Beach Gives campaign director, many nonprofits exceeded their goals.

“We had 74 new organizations, and they were so excited with the outpouring of support. Some organizations who hadn’t ever done an online fundraising campaign were surprised at the number of donations that they were able to get,” said Galvez.

“I think having that city-wide day of support means so much to them,” said Galvez.

Port of Long Beach
The Port of Long Beach has been part of the 2nd District for the past 30 years, but the maps released last week show it being consolidated into one district, which could likely be the 1st District, if adopted as drawn. Putting the port into a West Long Beach district was a point made by the public so that the councilmember representing the Westside, an area burdened by port pollution, would also have direct relations with the port.

The 2nd District has been one of the more powerful districts in the city because of its boundaries including the port and the Downtown waterfront, but it appears that could be changing during this redistricting process.

“Given the performance on the project, we are not likely to work with them again,” Hickman said.

Breaking the contract is not expected to cost the city any additional money to complete the buildout, Hickman said.

The city will work with Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company to find a new contractor for the site.

Hickman said the project could benefit from a number of subcontractors remaining on the job that could start work to complete the stand in as little as a few weeks. The project is now expected to be completed by early 2022 when the new tenant, Gaucho Grill, can start its tenant improvements.

The concession stand could open for business by summer 2022.
Drive-In Movies Are Back!

The Port and City are partnering for a fall season of Twilight Cinema – free Saturday night family movies held at Long Beach City College's Pacific Coast Campus. First movie is Hocus Pocus on Oct. 23 – registration now open! Sign up at polb.com/twilightcinema.