Harbor Breeze ready to take business ‘to the next level’

By Christian May-Suzuki

The waves were particularly calm as Captain Dan Salas took to the sea. It started as an ordinary morning in April 2004 for Salas, who had brought Harbor Breeze Cruises to Long Beach four years prior and regularly took tourists out to see the dolphins and gray whales that swam through the nearby waters.

But suddenly, a huge body emerged from the water in the distance. Waves of white foam crashed where it had surfaced. The creature was far larger than anything Salas had seen before. He’d witnessed a blue whale. Its magnitude enthralled him.

Salas told the Business Journal that he’s not exactly sure why the whales began emerging near Long Beach. But he knew that he had to see more.

“I don’t know what happened. There was some sort of climate change or current change or something,” Salas recalled. But “I was so inspired by the blue whale.” That day Salas saw his first blue whale, and he and his whale-watching customers were able to traverse the 20 miles out to where the creature had surfaced to get a closer look.

But, it turned out, it wasn’t realistic to offer trips to see blue whales regularly.

“To get out to the whales and make it back, it took three, three and a half hours,” Salas said. “We could only spend about 10 minutes if we found a whale, that’s how far off they were if we even got lucky enough to find one.”

The giants traveled much farther from land than the dolphins and gray whales that Salas had built his business on, and his boats did not have the speed to efficiently make the longer trip.

“If you have a 10-knot boat and want to go 20 miles, it will take you about two hours just to get there,” Salas said. “Sometimes the trip would be [around] four hours, and the people get a little grumpy on the boat.”

Still, he was inspired to focus more of his efforts on pursuing the

Convention Center seeks larger acts

By Brandon Richardson

The lights dimmed in the cavernous theater as the band began to strum and bang their instruments. The monotonous mumble of the sold-out crowd erupted into raucous cheers as Bob Dylan walked onto the stage of the Terrace Theater and took his place behind the piano.

As the weathered voice of Dylan began to fill the room, the house lights were raised—not to their full luminosity but enough for the performer to see the faces among the crowd—and there they stayed. It’s an unusual request for an artist, but it’s one that Dylan specifically made, Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center Assistant Manager John Braun said.

Second Street is going through a transformation

By Christian May-Suzuki

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed Belmont Shore. Required shutdowns and a drop in foot traffic led to store closures. Vacancies have repeatedly popped up along Second Street.

But business owners in the area say the story’s not over for the shopping and dining district. It’s just time for a new chapter.

As more and more properties are being newly developed or sold for new businesses, Belmont Shore Business Association’s secretary and co-owner of Legends Sports Bar, Matt Peterson, said the area is in the midst of a transformation.

“The composite of businesses is going to change throughout the Shore as we go through the next 12 months,” Peterson said.

While older businesses like Gap, Fern’s Garden and Blue Cheese Pizza are gone, new options like cinnamon roll bakery Cinnaholic and Wine Beach have opened—while others, like South of Nick’s Mexican Kitchen, are in the works—to fill in the gaps.

Aaron Tofani, co-founder of Rance’s Pizza and a BSBA board member, said the shakeup may have
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Travel & Tourism.........3

LG receives $10.6M in federal funding for road improvements........3

Long Beach Jazz Festival returns after 2-year hiatus........3

Long Beach is ready to plan a new vision for its waterfront........4

Newswatch.............16

Southwest to offer seasonal nonstop flight from Long Beach to NOLA early next year........15

Crews main span of Gerald Desmond as demolition begins on 54-year-old bridge........20

By Brandon Richardson

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Travel & Tourism

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Long Beach is ready to plan a new vision for its waterfront

Before COVID hit, Long Beach was preparing to reimagine its waterfront. The Los Angeles Angels had expressed interest in building a new ballpark on the coastline here. City staff spent months exploring the idea of using the undeveloped, 13-acre “elephant lot” in Downtown for a stadium.

But then, of course, came 2020. City staff were redeployed to focus on the coronavirus pandemic, and plans to rethink Long Beach’s shoreline stalled.

In late 2019, the City Council approved spending $250,000 to kick off a new visioning process for the Planned Development District 6 (PD-6), which includes everything between Ocean Boulevard and the coast from Golden Shore Drive to Alamitos Avenue.

But, of course, came 2020. City staff were redeployed to focus on the coronavirus pandemic, and plans to rethink Long Beach’s shoreline stalled. Now, two and a half years later, the city is finally ready to restart that process.

“The city is creating a visioning plan for the redevelopment of the waterfront in Downtown, including the large “elephant lot” adjacent to the Convention Center,” Oscar Orci, Long Beach’s director of services, told me last week. “This is our way of doing business, if you will,” he said. “We reach out to the community and have them help us put the future of the city in a plan. It’s not done by staff in a vacuum. It’s not done by decision-makers alone. It’s done by everybody, so everybody gets an opportunity to participate.”

Still, city officials have some priorities in mind. Ideally, whatever comes to the shoreline will be beneficial to residents—and also boost tourism. Orci’s memo noted that a new Downtown Shoreline Specific Plan would include “stronger linkages between the coastal area and Downtown as well as the [Queensway] Bay Planned Development, and strategies to promote new uses that enhance the attractiveness of the area for new investment and visitors to the area.”

He echoed that sentiment in our conversation: “It’s a great opportunity to make sure that PD-6 blends in with PD-30 and PD-21,” he said, referring to the districts to the north, which includes Downtown and the East Village, and to the south across the water, which includes the Queen Mary. “PD-6 is a destination for our residents as well as visitors as well as those that are using the cruise lines,” Orci said, “so it’s an opportunity to really create a great vision for the area.”

“Services Director Oscar Orci told me last week, “so they can help us in terms of doing community outreach, conducting meetings, everything we need to do.”

The $250,000 the City Council approved almost three years ago is still available for the effort, Orci said, though he noted in a memo earlier this month that more funding to implement a years-long strategy would likely be necessary.

But for now, Orci said the city has the resources it needs to restart this work. Once a consultant is on board, Orci said his goal is to begin community engagement and outreach by the end of this year.

How long the process will take, though, is less clear. Orci’s memo pointed to other years-long projects like the Downtown Plan, the Globemaster Specific Plan and the Southeast Area Specific Plan as examples of what a PD-6 envisioning could entail.

The memo also noted city staff expect that “the visioning process and preparation of a Specific Plan would be completed and ready for implementation at the close of the 2028 Summer Olympic Games.”

While the Olympics are top of mind for any new waterfront development, Orci was careful to emphasize that whatever comes of the process will be community-led.

FROM THE EDITOR: HAYLEY MUNGUIA

The city of Long Beach is creating a visioning plan for the redevelopment of the waterfront in Downtown, including the large “elephant lot” adjacent to the Convention Center.

“Within the next month or so, we will be reaching out to solicit a few community consultants to help us with this effort,” the city’s Development Services Director Oscar Orci told me last week.

** Programming and artists subject to change.**
After busy Long Beach Pride weekend, gay bars show support for LGBTQ cultural district

The long-time presence of these bars has inspired a potential new designation for a chunk of East Broadway.

By Christian May-Suzuki

Craig Wirtz still remembers a time when it was hardly accepted to open a bar catering to the LGBTQ community. As the general manager of The Falcon—a gay bar that opened in Long Beach in 1990—Wirtz remembers how wary people were during its initial days.

“When we first opened up, the cops would come here all the time to check on us,” Wirtz said. “You couldn’t really even touch each other.”

Acceptance of LGBTQ establishments and activities by the community has taken tremendous steps since then, highlighted most recently by the three-day Long Beach Pride event earlier this month. The celebration is a key time of year for many of the owners of gay bars on East Broadway, long recognized as a major hub for the LGBTQ community in Long Beach.

For these bars and similar establishments, the event means huge boosts in business—something Wirtz set up an area in The Falcon’s parking lot to serve patrons, and Darling brought outside equipment like large outdoor fans to ensure that the increased volume of people on his establishment were still able to remain comfortable.

“We really try to stock up and prepare so that the customers...“ Continued on page 10

Craig Wirtz, general manager of The Falcon, the gay bar in Long Beach, stands outside his establishment before the start of the Pride parade.

The Harbor Breeze whale watching tour operates out of Long Beach as part of its business, which provides both whale watching tours and informative cruises based just outside the Aquarium of the Pacific.

The more elusive blue whale has its own season, spanning generally right after Christmas, but things used to start his winter season whale season, which runs typically first is the more traditional gray whale season, which runs typically.

There are two distinct seasons. The other season, spanning generally begins appearing. Used to start his winter season, which runs typically.

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In pandemic’s wake, business is better than ever for Gondola Getaway service

By Christian May-Suzuki

When Michael O’Toole started his Gondola Getaway service 40 years ago with a repurposed Pakistani fishing boat and a life preserver, it wasn’t exactly something he expected to stick. He started the business as a project while attending USC in January 1982 and continued it as a full-fledged operation after he graduated that summer because he “needed something to do."

But somehow, it’s stuck around for almost four decades.

O’Toole grew up in Naples, an area inspired by (though not named after) the gondolier’s birthplace in Venice, Italy. Many of the streets have names with Italian roots, and there were efforts around 1960 to bring gondolias to the area to help bolster the connection. But that movement faded away by the late 1970s—that is, until Gondola Getaway arrived in 1982, when O’Toole thought it would be interesting to give the idea another try.

“We were taught the history of Naples Island at a young age, and in all the local stores and bars and restaurants, there were old pictures of gondolias,” O’Toole said. “It was pretty enticing to learn a little bit more about that or picture what it would be like with gondolas as a business."

When he first started, O’Toole and his team did not have the proper equipment to provide the gondolier experience that they were looking for. Instead, O’Toole initially used his repurposed gondola to carry passengers around the canal.

But there were a couple of problems. First, the boats relied on electric batteries, which could inconveniently die mid-ride. Second, the boats could not handle wind well.

O’Toole came to see that no matter how hard he worked, Gondola Getaway would not meet its potential without using actual gondolas. So he traveled to Venice for the first time in 1982 with a mission.

“I flew over to Venice to just start to immerse myself in what it is that we are trying to replicate,” he said.

That initial trip did wonders for O’Toole. He recalled being on the back of a boat as it went down the Grand Canal—one of the main waterways that cuts through the center of Venice in a reverse S-pattern—as a moment that truly solidified his passion for the gondola business.

“I’ve been around boats my whole life, but I had never rode Venetian-style,” O’Toole said. “All of the sudden, there was one on the Grand Canal, on the back of a gondola in Venice, Italy, and it is that doesn’t inspire you, I don’t know what will.”

Now that he had an understanding of what made Venetian gondolas so special, it was time for him to get his boats together. Many of his boats needed to be especially built because of the size constraints back in Long Beach. The design of the boats was faithful to their Italian counterparts but had to be scaled down from 37 feet in length to 20 feet.

In Long Beach, which has a noise ordinance that cuts through the center of Venice in a reverse S-pattern, the gondola’s birthplace in Venice, Italy. Many of the streets have names with Italian roots, and there were efforts around 1960 to bring gondolias to the area to help bolster the connection. But that movement faded away by the late 1970s—that is, until Gondola Getaway arrived in 1982, when O’Toole thought it would be interesting to give the idea another try.

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In Long Beach, which has a noise ordinance that limits the number of daily flights to 15, gondolas are not yet flying all available slots, according to airport spokesperson Katie Kayenkland.

“Although there are some variations on different days of the week, most days our commercial airline carriers are flying 14 flights,” Kayenkland said in an email. The figure does not count one daily flight by UPS for cargo delivery.

In Long Beach, which has a noise ordinance that limits the number of daily flights to 15, gondolas are not yet flying all available slots, according to airport spokesperson Katie Kayenkland.

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For years five through 10, that breakdown shifts to 25% or more for commercial entertainers, 10 to 15% less for convention and trade shows, and 5% or less for community events.

Although the gondas are viewed as hovering around the 15% figure now for commercial entertainment and are continuing to expand their offerings, “We’ve always been an important venue for the arts,” which is an interactive Broadway-style event, said a top performer.

Long Beach Airport passenger traffic, data from the U.S. Transportation Department, shows.

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New cafe Zuzu’s Petals coming to East Village

At the time, his office happened to be situated above The Cove Cafe, a popular spot in Palos Verdes Estates, and he ended up leasing the space to John Papadakis. He relished the idea it was a decision that was a long time coming. “It’s a wonderful addition to the community for the time.”

“Jimmy Stewart needed to live out his nightmares to realize he was grateful for what he had,” said of the Zuzu’s Petals represent the life he’s grateful for,” Papadakis said, explaining that the decision felt right, “like a cosmic pull to return to my roots.”

While Papadakis still does some work in the field, he has been legally shifted his focus to opening the restaurant where he will be able to serve food and bartender with customers, and Franco can focus on developing the menu.

Plans to open around late August, the duo will tackle concepts with walk-up counter service and patio garden seating, serving small batch coffee, fresh pastries and a full menu of organic, seasonal offerings from the local farmers market.

“I think it’s really important that customers can go to their own restaurant concept in Long Beach,” he said. “Perhaps it will help us make up ground, and it’s our time gay bars in Long Beach along with several other long-time gay bars on East Broadway as an LGBTQ cultural district. “These bars have been here for a long time. We are the backbone of the LGBTQ community in the city.”

For Darling, establishing an LGBTQ corridor on East Broadway is something that can allow the residents of the community to show how important support of the community is even as the area is shifting. “As these neighborhoods change, you’ll see some of that cultural history in every generation.”

“I think it’s really important that we maintain this corridor in the community for the time.”

“Long Beach Pride is shifting. The community is even as the area is shifting. We’re looking forward to the future,” Duncan said. “We know that Second Street will always revive itself.”

Evan Papadakis spent years as a bartender, a manager and owner of food and entertainment known throughout the region, when his dad and uncle were away.

Now he and Franco plan to open their new restaurant concept in Long Beach, an East Village cafe called Zuzu’s Petals, formerly occupied by Steam, which closed in 2019.

The name of the restaurant comes from the 1984 film “It’s a Wonderful Life” in which the main character, George Bailey (played by Jimmy Stewart), on the verge of suicide, is reminded of the meaning of his life after pulling from his pocket the petals from a flower his daughter had given him.

Franco said when he connected with former Franco, he began feeling as if a weight had lifted. His sense of gratitude began to shift and he started feeling like he’d gotten his life back.

By Matt Miller

Long Beach Pride
Continued from page 7

By Matt Miller

Long Beach Pride
Continued from page 7

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The Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center (LBCEC) is an innovator—one of the first centers in the country to adopt a residential-style environment with in-house furnishings, theatrical lighting, and a fully integrated hybrid events platform. LBCEC continues to lead the way. From individual venues to hallways and corridors, every inch of the convention center is a place to gather—you can even host events on the stage of one of the most storied theaters in California.

Innovation Spurs Success

Set on a bustling downtown waterfront, the Convention Center’s indoor and outdoor venues offer a suite of in-house assets—rigging, theatrical lighting, LED game tables, contemporary furnishings, and other key components—at a cost savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Whether you’re looking for a street party, an evening beneath the palm trees, or a glamorous indoor affair beneath glittering chandeliers, the possibilities are endless.

Working with the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), the Convention Center continues to be recognized for its service and TED-inspired, boutique venues, winning numerous meeting industry awards; the CVB winning the industry’s prestigious Stella Award for Best CVB in the Far West five years running, and the Center winning for Best Convention Center in the Far West four years running. In 2021, LBCVB won PCMA’s highest honor, the Chairman’s Award.

People have heard me say before that if my CEO could literally pick up the Long Beach Convention Center and take it with us we would: “We love the building. We are rebooked to come again in 2023.”

– Deirdre L. Clemmons, CMP, CAE, Senior Vice President, Events and Strategic Partnerships, Airports Council International - North America

“Long Beach has figured out how to create a truly interactive party. You’re not starting from scratch. You’ve already got a lot of options to choose from. You can kind of just come in and order off a menu for what you want your meeting to be like, and they have something to accommodate that.”

– Barbara Palmer, Deputy Editor, Convene Magazine

“I have been in the association business for more than 30 years. I have seen a lot of convention centers, and Long Beach has thought through every single piece of what the meeting experience should be. They have created a space that I don’t think is duplicated anywhere in the country. … Long Beach has done so much of the work for you. They have invested in incredible set pieces and décor and lighting grids, and things that most associations can’t afford. At most convention centers, we actually pay a decorator to bring in sofas and chairs to create lounge space. … We don’t have to do that at Long Beach; all of that is part of the package. It can save millions of dollars.”

– Scott Stroyn, Executive Director of the American Physiological Society.
Solta Tacos & Margaritas takes over former Rock Bottom Brewery site in Downtown Long Beach

By Tom Geurten

Solta Tacos & Margaritas, the popular Mexican restaurant featuring items inspired by the cuisine of the west coast, will open with a Santa Maria-style grill and smoker, opened earlier this month at 111 W. Ocean Blvd, the spot of the long-vacant Rock Bottom Brewery in Downtown Long Beach.

Rock Bottom was the first major restaurant to shutter in the city because of the coronavirus, and was a clear and alarming signal that the pandemic was going to have a major impact on the physical and financial health of the city.

Solta is a major signal that the virus has, at least, settled down enough for things to be returning to whatever the new normal looks like for Long Beach, taking place on the most vulnerable intersection in town on the northwest corner of Ocean Boulevard and Pine Avenue, the historic crossroads of the city.

“We couldn’t be more lucky to have the eaterie come,” said Randy Sharpe, Solita Tacos & Margaritas Experience Restaurant Group, which owns several restaurants in Long Beach including two Solita locations in Huntington Beach and Valencia, as well as the El Toyo Acapulco chains, Laguna Beach’s Las Brisas and a half-dozen others.

Sharpe said he hopes to not only attract local business people, but also the many nearby residents along Ocean and in Downtown, as well as people into the returning convention business.

“We’re very accessible, it’s just a place to have a good time and you can have a meal and a couple of drinks for a good price,” said Sharpe.

Some highlights from the menu include:

• Pork Belly Dorado Taco: pork belly meladned in house for six hours, served with amarillo hot sauce, onions, cilantro and lime.

• Vampio Taco: double tortilla with carne asada or grilled chicken, with cheese, serrano peppers, green onions, guacamole, chipotle sauce, cotija cheese and salsa fresca.

• Cadillac: wood-grilled carne asada, melted cheese, chipotle-garlic shrimp, asparagus and salsa fresca.

• Grilled Corn Elote: roasted and served with butter, chipotle-garlic aioli, cotija cheese and green onions.

• Steak Carne Asada: wood-grilled steak, served with a side of chimichurri; served with two sides.

• Pork Belly Carne Asada: wood-grilled pork, served with a side of chimichurri; served with two sides.

• Grilled Corn Elote: roasted and served with butter, chipotle-garlic aioli, cotija cheese and green onions.

Since the departure of JetBlue and its passenger volumes, pacing well within 4% of pre-pandemic levels, Southwest has continued to add new routes, including its service to Long Beach, which is continuing to attract new business.

The remaining flights are held by Delta Air Lines (3), American Airlines (4), Hawaiian Airlines (2) and Breeze Airways (1). Southwest is the only airline holding new flights.

“Southwest’s announcement a little more than a month ago of this inaugural service was a clear and alarming signal that the pandemic was going to have a major impact on the physical and financial health of the city.

“Since the departure of JetBlue in October 2020, Southwest has become the dominant carrier at LGB, holding 58% of the market share in a statement, and I’m glad to see the expansion of our operations,”
Rocket Lab launches new U.S. spy satellite

By Brandon Richardson

The National Reconnaissance Office, which has operated U.S. satellites for more than six decades, has successfully launched a new satellite following a successful mission by Rocket Lab earlier this month. Described as “One Laptop per Child,” the mission blasted off from Rocket Lab’s New Zealand launch complex Pad A at 11:30 p.m. PDT on July 12, which was 6:30 a.m. local time, and its first checks-in data to the City Council. Councilmember Cindy Allen recused herself from the Downtown vote because she owns two properties located within the BID’s boundaries. The BIDs receive their funding through property assessments, which means owners must be approved first through a vote of property owners in the area. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Downtown BID—which spans Anaheim Street from Raymond to Alamitos avenues—was not renewed last year, the end of its initial five-year contract, due to a lack of support from owners who were losing money. But the various services the BID provides such as street cleanups, sidewalk power washing and security are set to return with the new contract that spans Jan. 1, 2023, through Dec. 31, 2027.

“Midtown has been a catalyst for economic development in the neighborhood by providing a clean and safe neighborhood for businesses and residents,” BID President Susana Sngiem said during the council meeting. Throughout the pandemic, the organization provided over $73,000 in direct grants to the area’s small businesses, she added. The BID distributed funds to property owners along the corridor. Of these, 42 valid ballots were counted, according to city staff, and 86% were in favor of renewing the BID.

The property assessment will generate $340,000 in revenue for the Midtown BID during the first year, according to a staff report. City-owned properties would account for $26,000 of the assessment next year, which is not currently budgeted.

The DLBA, meanwhile, has served Downtown businesses and residents since 1998, and its renewal included an expansion of its boundaries. The northern boundary along Pacific Avenue will be extended from Sixth to Eighth street to match the boundary on Pine Avenue. South of Ocean Boulevard, the historical boundary is expanding to encompass the waterfront south of Shoreline Drive. The new southern boundary will include the sidewalks along the Convention Center on Pine Avenue and much of the Rainbow Harbor area—stretching from the roundabout near the Aquarium of the Pacific along the waterfront to Shoreline Village, which is not included in the update. The BID renewed garnered more support from property owners than those on the Downtown. The capitalization dissemination disseminated 3,145 ballots and, of the 877 valid returns, 76.96% were in favor of renewal. As part of the renewal, assessment fees are set to increase in an average of 5%. With the increase and additional properties, the assessment will generate more than $7.3 million in revenue for the organizations, according to a staff report.

The city’s portion of the assessment for fiscal years 2023 to 2027, according to city documents, an increase of almost $8,000 due in large part to the inclusion of the Convention Center frontage. Of the total, 2,825,442 will be paid by street centers, which manages the Pike Outlets property. The remainder of the assessment will be paid by various city departments, according to a staff report.

“Specific impacts at the

City seeks to incentivize landlords to accept housing vouchers

By Jason Rutz

The Long Beach City Council voted unanimously last week in favor of looking at options to entice landlords to accept the hundreds of homeless people in the city who are now housed in government housing vouchers that could pay for a significant portion of their rents.

This year, Long Beach saw a 6.2% increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness since 2020, with about 700 more people living unhoused, according to the most recent count in February. However, according to city staff officials say that over 400 of those people would not accept Section 8 vouchers that pay up to 70% of their monthly rents, and sometimes more.

Councilmember Stacy Mungo Flanigan said the problem has been finding willing landlords to accept the vouchers. Her proposal asked for incentives ranging from reduced rent to hotel vouchers that could reduce the city’s unhoused population by about 20%.

Mungo Flanagan said that if every person with a housing voucher were housed, the city could reduce the city’s unhoused population by about 20%.

The BIDs, meanwhile, have served businesses and property owners in the areas, helping to maintain infrastructure within the BID boundaries.

Businesses and property owners in the Downtown area and along Anaheim Street will continue to receive infrastructure maintenance, security and other forms of support for years to come following the renewal of their respective business improvement districts by the City Council last week.

The Downtown Long Beach Alliance and Midtown BIDs were both renewed for a period of 10 years following two unanimous votes by the City Council. Councilmember Cindy Allen recused herself from the Downtown vote because she owns two properties located within the BIDs’ boundaries.

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Traffic slowed to a crawl at Long Beach, LA ports as truckers protested state law

By Brandon Richardson

The 750 freeway approaching Downtown Long Beach and the city’s port is known for its congestion during the best of times. Traffic on July 13, however, crept along especially slowly due to dozens of truckers protesting a California labor law.

“Truckers fought for an exemption to just that. I applaud them for voice their opinion, but kept this cargo moving through the port complex. And these drivers are very respectful to just that. I applaud them for coming out here today.” Seroka said in a news conference. “We gave them the depth, the breadth, the space they needed to voice their opinion, but kept this cargo moving through the port complex. And these drivers are very respectful to just that. I applaud them for coming out here today.”

The convoy was part of a 24-hour work stoppage. The protest came as supply chain congestion continues at the Long Beach and LA ports. In Long Beach, the number of containers sitting on dock was up in recent days to levels not seen in months. At the end of October, the twin ports approved their plans to impose a “container dwell fee” for containers that sat on dock for extended periods of time. The supply chain responded and the number of languishing containers declined for months.

“Unfortunately, it didn’t matter how many independent drivers

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Crews remove main span of Gerald Desmond as demolition begins on 54-year-old bridge

By Brandon Richardson

After spanning the Back Channel at the Port of Long Beach for over half a century, the demolition of the Gerald Desmond Bridge officially began earlier this month. The 3,600-ton main span of the old bridge was slowly lowered onto a barge using a strand jack system—a bundle of steel cables run through hydraulic cylinders. The section was lowered at a rate of about 3 inches per minute, or 15 feet per hour, according to Duane Kenagy, capital programs executive for the port.

“It’s being to watch but that’s exactly what we wanted,” Kenagy said, noting that the process went smoothly with no issues.

Before the start of the demolition on July 9, Kiewit West—the group awarded the project contract by the port—had to erect additional supports for the bridge, Kenagy said. The day prior, workers severed the dome-shaped steel structure on either end.

While there was no public comment during the DLBdemolition, but numerous business owners turned out to voice their support for the council members. The speakers praised the Clean and Safe teams, which patrol the area cleaning the sidewalks and offering assistance to residents and visitors alike.

John Tulby, CEO of Pedal Movement, which manages the city’s active transportation program, including its bikeshare, said his First Street facility has been broken into about six times in the past two years. Rather than having to eat the cost for repairs, Tulby said the DLB was able to provide grant funding. Denise Carter, who said she has lived in the Downtown area much more than 20 years and is a DLB member, said events such as Taste of Downtown, which manages the bikeshare, became the center of a community in the up-and-coming neighborhood. But, now, the longtime anchor of River Row is moving.

“Art is forever,” I reflect on all those years, and all those memories,” Carter wrote earlier this month on Facebook in a farewell message to her local customers. The beloved neighborhood institution reluctantly closed its doors on July 14, and it’s time to reopen this fall in a new location a couple of blocks away.

“We will be Portfolio and then some,” said Kansteiner. “The same great baristas, the same service plus an amazing kitchen and a lot more outdoor seating.”

The new place is larger in square footage than both Portfolio and Kerstin’s second business, Berlin Bistro, which will relocate from its current location near downtown.

“This will be Portfolio and then some,” said Kansteiner. “The same great baristas, the same service plus an amazing kitchen and a lot more outdoor seating.”

The new place is larger in square footage than both Portfolio and Berlin Bistro combined. It will be open in the morning and early afternoon, as before, before transitioning into dinner service in the evening with a fresh and innovative menu brought by Chef Rich Fry.

For Kansteiner, one of her biggest priorities during the shift was ensuring that her staff would be well taken care of.

“We have employees that have families and have literally been with us for years. We couldn’t imagine going on a pink slip and letting them go, especially during the pandemic where nobody knew what was happening,” she said.

As for Berlin Bistro, which she opened in 2011 with friend and business partner Rand Foster, who owns the neighboring record store Fingertips, it will open up under the new Portfolio concept opens its doors this fall. Its vacancy will quickly be filled by another restaurant business that Kansteiner is working to solidify.

“In the end, they reached a settlement that ensured Portfolio’s lease would be extended until July 2022 and their rent would be covered for the next 12 months, helping Portfolio recuperate some of the money lost during the lawsuit. Portfolio’s absence will leave big shoes to fill on the historic corner, but Salimi has plans for a $1 million renovation and is already sorting through popular restaurant groups that are pursuing the space, he said.

Kansteiner, meanwhile, has plans of her own. The change is something the community should be excited about, she said. "That’s the kind of story of Portfolio."

Continued on page 22...
of the 410-foot-long main span in preparation for the July 9 operation.

At 6 a.m. July 9, the crew attached a strand jack system to each corner of the bridge. Once secure, the team cut through both ends of the section, which took several hours.

The 155-foot descent began around 12:30 p.m. and touched down on the barge below at around 9 p.m., according to port spokesman Lee Peterson. The barge then transported the section to another area of the port where it will be disassembled, with metal and other materials to be recycled or salvaged.

“This moment has been 20 years in the making, from the time we started planning to replace the Gerald Desmond with a taller, wider and safer bridge that would allow the Port of Long Beach to remain competitive for years to come,” port Executive Director Mario Cordero said in a statement.

Opened in 1968, the old 5,134-foot-long through-arch bridge was named in honor of a former Long Beach city attorney and council member who helped secure its funding but died during its construction.

“The bridge’s replacement, the Long Beach International Gateway Bridge, opened in October 2020, marking the end of the Gerald Desmond’s service to the port and the city,” Cordero said. “Like its predecessor, the new bridge is a critical link in the global supply chain and Southern California’s regional transportation network,” Cordero said.

The new bridge allows for ships as much as 50 feet taller to pass beneath and into the inner harbor, which is critical as vessels continue to get larger and demand at the port increases.

Kiewit West was awarded the bridge demolition contract in July 2021. Funding for the nearly $60 million project is included within the overall $1.57 billion budget for the design and construction of the International Gateway Bridge.

Demolition is slated for completion by the end of 2023.
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