

LONG BEACH

BUSINESS JOURNAL

An edition of the Long Beach Post



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Danielle Curtiss of Long Beach has sought a mental health conservatorship for her son, who has schizophrenia, for two years.

The system is designed for people to give up

By Melissa Evans

Danielle Curtiss, exhausted and angry, was consumed with a question: why should it be so hard for a mother to help her son?

At 18, he was diagnosed with schizophrenia. During the next two years, he was either hospitalized or placed on involuntary psychiatric holds some 20 times. He repeatedly threatened to kill himself. “I don’t

want to live anymore,” he would say.

Over the years, Curtiss says she filed at least a dozen missing person reports after he ran away from home or bolted from treatment programs, often taking shelter in homeless encampments. After leaving one program in Downey, he walked 50 miles to Glendora, where he was hospitalized for a week due to renal failure from extreme dehydration.

Curtiss says her son has been arrested multiple times for non-

violent offenses, with the exception of two. Once as a juvenile and then as an adult, he was taken into custody for battery against her. She told police he had, among other acts of violence, slapped and choked her.

Dating back to middle school, he’d been prescribed an array of psychopharmaceuticals but mostly stuck to weed, which he started smoking at 12, eventually moving on to meth and ketamine as he got older.

For these reasons and dozens of others, Curtiss, who is a nurse, says she became convinced that the only way her son could be saved was if he was placed under an involuntary mental health conservatorship, giving her access to his records and control of his care. She believed he surely met the requirements because he was gravely disabled, a potential danger to himself and others.

But as if her son’s troubles weren’t painful enough to face, she would now be forced to confront a mental health system that left no statutory

pathway for a despondent mother or other loved one to obtain the kind of highly restrictive court-ordered conservatorship she was seeking.

Currently, under state law, only a physician in a hospital can initiate that process, which requires strong communication between public and private medical providers and a willingness by hospitals, insurers and doctors to take action—all of which are in short supply.

As homelessness rises among severely mentally ill individuals, she found herself at ground zero in a growing debate in California over whether restrictions for such measures should be loosened to confront the new realities on the street or kept strict to guard against potential violations of an individual’s rights.

A clash of rights and realities

Despite wide acknowledgement of the conservatorship system’s shortcomings in addressing rising

Continued on page 6

LONG BEACH
BUSINESS JOURNAL
211 E. Ocean Blvd., Ste. 400
Long Beach, CA 90802

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Los Angeles, CA
PERMIT NO. 447



Dancers perform with 'uli'uli, traditional Hawaiian feathered rattles, during the unveiling of Southwest Airlines' Hawaiian-themed aircraft at Long Beach Airport.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal 17

Health Care 3

The system is designed for people to give up Cover

CSULB expert says long COVID research is limited for now. What we know 3

Medi-Cal patients may have to fill out renewal forms to keep coverage 3

Long Beach could look to improve access to mental health services 5

NewsWatch 9

City in talks to buy Long Beach Rescue Mission property 9

Was your trash pickup day skipped? Long Beach says it's due to staffing shortages 10

Belmont Brewing Company, Legend's get permanent parklet approval—but residents say they will appeal 11

1st Long Beach commercial space station to Launch as early as 2025 11

For maximum profit in selling your house, hire a stager to 'hip it up' 12

Long Beach youth can now vote on new summer programs 13

Nick the Greek replaces Pietris Bakery in Belmont Shore; opening set for June 14

Rocket Lab puts 2 storm-tracking satellites into orbit for NASA 15

Beer and wine sales coming to two beach concession stands 16

Aldi is coming to Central Long Beach 16

'We let a lot of people down': Southwest CEO pledges company-wide improvements during Long Beach visit 17

New zoning in West Long Beach to attract more commercial development 18

4 potential Belmont Shore gateway sign designs revealed 19

Here's where Long Beach roads will be repaired over the next few years 20

City turns to broker to sell old Fire Station 9 site 21

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

LBBJ.com/subscribe

Subscriptions: (562) 553-3391
subscriptions@lbbj.com
Editorial: (562) 655-7678
editor@LBBJ.com
Advertising: (562) 912-0161
info@LBBJ.com

Long Beach Business Journal
211 E. Ocean Blvd., Ste. 400
Long Beach, CA 90802
Editorial Deadline:
Two weeks prior to publication. Email press releases to editor@lbbj.com.
Advertising Deadline:
Wednesday prior to publication.
See editorial calendar at
lbbusinessjournal.com/advertise.

longbeachbusinessjournal

lbbizjourn

longbeachpost

Editor **Hayley Munguia** // Advertising Director **Andrea Estrada** // Visuals Editor **Brandon Richardson** // Assistant Editor **Kat Schuster** // Columnist **Tim Grobaty** // Reporters **Laura Anaya-Morga, Caitlin Antonios, Fernando Haro Garcia, Cheantay Jensen, Tess Kazenoff, Brandon Richardson, Alicia Robinson, Jason Ruiz, Jackie Rae** // Lead Graphic Designer **Candice Wong** // Graphic Designer **Chanel Villanueva** // Publisher Emeritus **George Economides**

The Long Beach Business Journal is a publication of Pacific Community Media. The Business Journal is published every other Tuesday. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is strictly prohibited unless otherwise stated. Opinions expressed by perspective writers and guest columnists are not necessarily the views of the Long Beach Business Journal.

monday morning coffee

&

Biz Brief

FREE email newsletters about issues, events and meetings for the week.

Monday Morning Coffee is sent out at 7 a.m., and BizBrief is news of the day, sent out Wednesday and Friday afternoons.

CSULB expert says long COVID research is limited for now. What we know



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Kamiar Alaei, a global health policy expert who teaches at Cal State Long Beach, is pictured at the university.

Some 27% have reported significant symptoms that hinder their day-to-day activities, but much remains unknown about chronic COVID.

By Tess Kazenoff

Even as policies have shifted back toward a pre-pandemic sense of normalcy, much is still unknown about the long-term effects of the coronavirus.

For those suffering from chronic COVID in particular, research is still developing, and many questions, such as why only some people suffer from long-term symptoms and how they can navigate a diagnosis and treatment, remain unanswered.

Initially, COVID-19 was seen as an acute disease, with a rapid

Continued on page 4

Medi-Cal patients may have to fill out renewal forms to keep coverage

By Alicia Robinson

While COVID-19 is still around, most of the emergency declarations and special provisions that attended the last three years are winding down – and for anyone whose health insurance comes from Medi-Cal, that means filing paperwork to keep your coverage.

Before the pandemic, people covered by Medi-Cal, which insures low-income families, normally had to provide information every year to ensure they were still eligible. But federal legislation in 2020 allowed states to put that annual process on hold to keep people from losing their insurance during a widespread public health emergency.

Now it's starting again, and it will likely affect thousands of Long Beach residents, who need to make sure the county social services office has their current address – and if they get a health insurance renewal form in a yellow envelope, to complete it and turn it in.

Los Angeles County started processing renewals April 1, but Karla Lee Romero, who is director of Medi-Cal product management for L.A. Care, said everyone's renewal date is different, and it could take 14 months to get through all members. (L.A. Care is the largest public health plan for Medi-Cal eligible residents of the county.)

"We are trying to raise awareness and not panic," said Phinney Ahn, L.A. Care's executive director of Medi-Cal. "What we're trying to avoid is any disruptions in care."

L.A. Care covers about 106,000 people in Long Beach, according to a spokeswoman for the health plan. A small number Medi-Cal recipients will get automatically re-enrolled, but L.A. Care is estimating up to 13% of its members could face disenrollment.

Staff at L.A. Care have been trying to get the word out to people since before April 1, and Ahn said they're stressing four points:

- Make sure the county social services department has up-to-date contact information so you'll get any

MARK SCHNEIDER
HAND-MADE
FINE JEWELRY

Citrine & Diamond Earrings
\$2,799

Free parking in our lot!

562-526-0856
245 Promenade N
Downtown Long Beach
www.markschneiderdesign.com

Continued on page 8

Long Covid

Continued from page 3

infection as well as recovery, but that mentality has since shifted, explained global health policy expert and Cal State Long Beach professor Kamiar Alaei.

Chronic COVID has since been defined as experiencing symptoms for longer than four weeks, but details beyond that are still relatively unclear, Alaei said.

According to Alaei, more than 200 related symptoms have been identified, although “the challenge is that they have different contributing factors,” Alaei said.

For some, infection continues after four weeks. Some people may experience no symptoms at first, until they activate later. Sometimes it can be an overreaction of the immune system, Alaei said.

While there can be impacts in different parts of the body, such as respiratory issues in the lungs or memory-related brain issues, typically patients report feeling malaise and fatigue.

“They cannot continue (to do) what they used to, they feel that they are completely different people,” Alaei said.

Of those who have had COVID as of January 2023, 11% of people

reported that they were currently experiencing long COVID, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data. And among those with long COVID, 79% reported having limitations to their day-to-day activities and 27% characterize the limitations as significant.

However, Alaei suspects this number could be higher, as this statistic only looks at those who are pursuing medical care, he said.

“We are missing most of those who are struggling,” Alaei said.

In February 2021, the National Institutes of Health announced a \$1.15 billion initiative over four years to study chronic COVID, providing a promising avenue to learning more about who long COVID impacts and how to treat it.

But more than two years later, the funding has yet to result in a clinical trial, Alaei said.

“The money was allocated, still, we don’t know what is the main contributing factor, and we know there are lots of people who are struggling with chronic COVID,” Alaei said.

Without a clinical trial, it is impossible to make evidence-based decisions regarding treatments, Alaei said.

Currently, health care providers are able to make recommendations to manage symptoms, hopefully reducing the severity of the disease,

Alaei said.

Doctors can examine patients’ histories, including when they had COVID-19, how many times they may have had it and the severity of the cases, along with what medications were taken, but some people experienced asymptomatic cases and did not test, while others may have attributed their symptoms to a cold or the flu, making receiving a diagnosis even more difficult, Alaei said.

“But I’m optimistic,” said Alaei. Within six months to a year, he hopes that more information—and more funding, will be available, he said.

“This is a kind of chicken and egg—how we can get those solutions when there is no clinical trial,” Alaei said. “This is a lesson learned . . . how we could prevent the proportion of this population not to be exposed or infected.”

At the start of the pandemic, countries had to juggle which approach to take, and many governments, including within the United States, politicized non-political health concerns, said Alaei, who has focused his research on how outcomes have differed in Democrat- versus Republican-led states.

After a year and a half of research, ultimately, prevention measurements typically taken in Democrat-led states, such as mask-wearing, social distancing,

and encouraging vaccination, did make a difference in outcomes. Rates of infection as well as deaths due to COVID-19 were higher in Republican-led states, he said.

“This is a lesson for the future occasions when we have some outbreaks or pandemics,” Alaei said. “We should be unbiased and apolitical and rely on evidence. And I think that’s the big lesson we learned and how we should allocate our budgets.”

While three years later, there is a sense of pandemic fatigue, health literacy for the general population is necessary, and it is still important to take preventive measures, Alaei said.

During the first year or two of the pandemic, more researchers dedicated themselves to studying COVID-19, but it is unclear if in the long run, the same amount of research will be dedicated to studying coronavirus, Alaei said.

“COVID is not over. . . We get new mutations, new variants of COVID,” said Alaei. “So we have to be prepared and try to use some of the measures we used to make it part of our habits . . . particularly if we will travel to other countries.”

Alaei urged anyone who experiences symptoms to wear a mask, and for everyone, especially those age 65 and over, to get vaccinated and boosted, which includes protection against newer variants. ■

Long Beach could look to improve access to mental health services

Long Beach, which is currently limited by state laws on what mental health services it can provide, could look to boost access to contacting providers.

By Jason Ruiz

Navigating the labyrinth of mental health services providers can be frustrating, if not impossible, for those seeking help. To try to bridge that gap, Long Beach, which is currently limited by state laws on what services it can provide, could look to boost coordination between providers, according to a new report.

The report, “Developing a Robust Mental Health System in Long Beach,” was authorized by the City Council in November 2021, when it asked the city to look at ways of improving mental health service capacity in Long Beach.

It details the challenges of navigating the current system, which is full of acronyms for various county departments and providers as well as limitations depending on age, gender and whether or not a person has insurance.

The roadblocks and gaps within the system exist as the prevalence of mental health conditions continues to increase in the region. A 2018 survey found that 42% of adults reported having anxiety or depression, according to the report.

A survey of Long Beach residents found that nearly 16% of 18-year-olds reported not having good mental health for 14 days or more, with the highest rates being in Central Long Beach.

However, actually bringing mental health services under the roof of the city’s Health Department would be costly and could require legislative changes, which is why the city could instead focus on being a better facilitator that connects people with other service providers, according to the report.

The City Council discussed the report at a meeting on May 2, but Kelly Colopy, the director of Health and Human Services, said that it’s not likely that the city will pursue creating its own mental health system or even become a vendor that works through the county’s Department of Mental Health.

“To open a system would be quite costly for the city to recreate what



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Health and Human Services Director Kelly Colopy speaks at a press conference during which officials announced the results of the 2023 homeless point-in-time count.

More than **355,000** workforce-ready Beach graduates since 1949

NO BARRIERS

TO OUR REACH IN CALIFORNIA AND BEYOND

California State University, Long Beach

csulb.edu

Continued on page 8

Comfort, Attention, Expertise...

KEEN HOME CARE

- Private In-Home Care
- 6-Bed Board and Care
- Transitional Care
- Helpful Planning Tools
- Answers to Your Questions

Keen provides you and your loved ones with dedicated concierge care through all your lifestyle transitions.

www.keenhomecare.com/JM2

Consider your Options
Call us 24/7
562.438.5336

For Senior Lifestyle Transitions™

Conservatorship

Continued from Cover

mental illness among the unhoused, recent legislative efforts to reform the 56-year-old law that governs mental health conservatorships have failed.

Strong pushback over the years has come from those who fear the state could regress to the era before 1967, when tens of thousands of people were locked away in state psychiatric hospitals—heavily medicated, subjected to experiments and stripped of their rights and freedom.

“Conservatorship is the most extreme form of deprivation of civil liberties, aside from the death penalty,” Susan Mizner, director of disability rights for the American Civil Liberties Union, said recently.

Reform advocates, meanwhile, say that as homelessness has reached crisis levels and the public regularly encounters severely mentally ill people on the street, the question they ask is: Why is no one doing anything?

“It’s the question we’re all asking,” says Jessica Cruz, executive director of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, which supports reforming conservatorship requirements to make them less restrictive.

The kind of conservatorship Curtiss was seeking was created under the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act, or LPS, which was passed in 1967. It is reserved specifically for people with diagnosed mental health disorders, usually schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

The law authorizes only hospitals and in-patient physicians to petition a county to obtain one—a statutory precaution against individuals being unnecessarily committed to locked-down mental health facilities. But records show that such measures are rarely sought.

Although 1,200 unhoused people in Long Beach said they suffered from severe mental illness during the 2023 homeless count, Long Beach hospitals sought only 20 LPS conservatorships in fiscal year 2021-2022, according to Los Angeles County data.

Long Beach Memorial sought one, while St. Mary Medical Center didn’t seek any. College Hospital, which has a contract with LA County to provide mental health services, sought 10, and the VA Hospital in Long Beach sought nine.

In that same 12-month span, a total of 388 LPS conservatorships were sought by general acute care hospitals overall in Los Angeles County, and the majority came from public hospitals run by the county, none of which are in Long Beach. Jails, courts, state hospitals and other specialized psychiatric facilities recommended 354 conservatorships to the county.

Of the total of 742 that were referred for LPS conservatorships, 700 were pursued by the county, records show. Of those, more than half, or 450 people, were placed

into conservatorships, with the courts naming the county as the conservator for 284 people, and assigning private conservators, such as family members, for the rest.

These court-ordered arrangements can be denied for a number of reasons, which include physicians not showing up to court to testify, or the person being able to prove to a judge they are not gravely disabled.

Connie Drexler, the county’s deputy public guardian, cited one case in which an unhoused man successfully argued that he was able to care for himself because he had a tent on Skid Row and that he could get food from a nonprofit.

“It may not be your or my first choice, but he had a plan for food, shelter and clothing, and the judge said that was acceptable,” she says.

At wit’s end

The turning point—the boiling point—for Curtiss in getting an LPS conservatorship for her son came in 2019.

By then, she had compiled a 10-page chronicle of his deteriorating mental health in all its manifestations, from his 5150 psychiatric holds to his brushes with the law to his turbulent relationship with his mother. She had to piece together some of his medical odyssey after he turned 18 because she could not directly access his records. (At Curtiss’ request, the Post agreed to withhold her son’s name to protect his privacy.)

Her “declaration in support of conservatorship” was intended to demonstrate that action was needed immediately, given his long history of life-threatening—and worsening—mental health crises.

“I have received NUMEROUS telephone calls from concerned police officers, security and members of the public whom he reaches out for help,” she wrote, detailing incidents in which he had been beaten bloody on the street, become lost after aimlessly riding trains and buses and plagued by paranoid fantasies of being tracked by “The Cartel,” among others.



Metropolitan in Norwalk is one of just five remaining psychiatric hospitals in California.



Courtesy of Danielle Curtiss
Danielle Curtiss and her son watch a Los Angeles Lakers game together. He was around 9 or 10 years old then.

She recounted one frightening incident while he was still in middle school.

One morning, he rode his bike to his former campus—where he’d experienced bullying—instead of his current one. There, he was arrested when staff discovered a Bowie-style knife in his backpack. His mother says he was placed in a juvenile diversion program.

Curtiss wrote that she agreed to a recommendation that her middle-schooler be given medication for a diagnosis of ADHD. His grades improved a bit, she said, but that didn’t last. Soon, he was getting busted at school and by police for having marijuana pipes and other paraphernalia.

His troubles mounted even as he played football at Poly High, then at Wilson, with dreams of someday suiting up for Notre Dame.

Curtiss enrolled him in multiple diversion and treatment programs, and doctors prescribed an array of medications, including Seroquel, Trazodone, Prozac, Haldol and Abilify.

As his illicit drug use escalated in his late teens, he began “to be motivated by some unknown internal stimulus to suddenly need to leave,” his mother wrote. “It is now so bad that he can not stay in any one place for greater than a few hours before this sensation drives him to leave.”

At 18, he was taken to Orange County’s St. Jude Hospital by Fullerton police after threatening suicide in a call to his mother, with whom he was no longer living. When Curtiss arrived at St. Jude, her son was rocking back and forth, holding his head in his hands, shouting “Turn the cameras off.”

He was placed on a short-term involuntary hold—one of many over the years—before being transferred to College Hospital in Long Beach and then to a Kaiser outpatient psychiatric program. It was there that he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and acute psychosis. He continued to spiral out of control.

In 2019, with her son now 20, Curtiss was at wit’s end. She took her 10-page litany of trauma to the Los Angeles County Probate Court and applied for a conservatorship that did not need to be initiated by a doctor in a medical facility, like an LPS conservatorship.

Probate conservatorships can be requested by family members or concerned caregivers. They’re typically sought for older adults with debilitating conditions such as dementia and, thus, are usually permanent.

LPS conservatorships are

reviewed annually with the goal of giving a person back their autonomy.

The probate court appointed an attorney to represent the interests of Curtiss’ son in the proceeding, a breakthrough for his mom, who had filed her document in the court record.

With the history supplied by Curtiss, the attorney assigned to the case prevailed upon a psychiatrist at Del Amo behavioral health hospital in Torrance, where Curtiss’ son was then being treated, to sign a “capacity declaration” stating that the patient was unable to provide informed consent for his medical care because of his impaired mental functions.

“Patient in the past will have periods of stability,” the treating psychiatrist wrote, “but frequently decompensates due various factors leading to behaviors that complicate his existing condition of schizophrenia.”

Ultimately, Curtiss’ probate court request was rejected when the court ruled that her son’s schizophrenia diagnosis would specifically require an LPS conservatorship initiated by a doctor.

But with the psychiatrist’s declaration in hand, Curtiss was able to persuade the Torrance hospital to begin the LPS process, which was completed just months later and named her as the conservator of her son’s affairs. She placed him in a locked facility in Long Beach.

“The conservatorship is the ONLY way I’ve been able to help him, the only way I have been able to participate in his care, advocate for him, develop a care plan for him,” Curtiss wrote in a recent email to the Post, adding: “I had to keep pressing everyone to do something. I couldn’t let up.”

A system bursting at the seams

As Curtiss’ experience illustrates, the hurdles to obtain LPS conservatorships remain high. Beyond questions of rights and freedoms, advocates contend that hospitals and physicians are disincentivized to participate for other reasons, including money.

The state’s insurance provider, Medi-Cal, pays hospitals the highest rate for providing acute care, when a patient is facing an emergency. Reimbursement rates are nearly cut in half if a patient is stabilized but waiting for a bed somewhere else or waiting for the conservatorship process to be finalized.

In Curtiss’ case, this took several months. Throughout that period, her son was kept in the emergency room at Del Amo hospital without access to activities or personal items. Curtiss says she shuttled back and forth between her nursing shifts to bring him fresh clothes and other necessities.

“He was miserable,” she says. “He was begging me to take him home.”

Hospitals readily acknowledge there simply aren’t enough alternative places, like subacute facilities, for patients like Curtiss’ son to go, says Sheree Lowe, vice president of the

California Hospital Association, a trade and advocacy group.

According to a 2022 RAND study, Los Angeles County has just 5.2 subacute psychiatric beds per 100,000 residents, the lowest rate in the state. To meet the existing need, that number should be 24.6, according to the study.

Gov. Gavin Newsom in March proposed a 2024 bond measure to raise an estimated \$1 billion annually for thousands of new mental health beds, from subacute to residential.

“It’s unacceptable what we’re dealing with, at scale, in the state of California,” the governor said at a media event.

Waiting for the courts to act, combined with this shortage of subacute options, means patients awaiting possible conservatorships are often discharged back to the street once they’re stabilized.

“My hope,” she says, “is that someday he can advocate for himself.”

- Danielle Curtiss, whose son suffers from schizophrenia

What’s more, such crucial decisions might be made without the benefit of knowing a patient’s full medical history because of inadequate communication between hospitals where an individual may have been earlier treated. They might not know, for example, such basic information as whether this is a patient’s first or 10th psychiatric hold or any previous attempts at outpatient treatment.

It’s advantageous when a patient is treated at the same facility multiple times so physicians have at least some history, says Lowe of the hospital association, noting patient privacy laws are very strict about sharing medical data.

“There’s really no way around that,” she says.

Pushing for change

Curtiss and many others have lobbied hard for changes to the law that governs LPS conservatorships, including recent efforts to loosen the standard of who qualifies.

A state bill introduced in March would expand the criteria to include any condition that causes an individual to be “at risk for serious harm” due to a mental illness or a substance use disorder—a new category of illness that could be taken into account for LPS conservatorships.

Although a similar measure failed in 2022, state Sen. Susan Talamantes Eggman, D-Stockton, who has authored several bills over the past five years to change mental health law, says the increasingly visible toll of mental health and homelessness could open a window for this one to succeed.

“Decades have passed and we’re still operating on laws that were a good idea at one point in our history,

but are now obsolete and a barrier to protect vulnerable people,” she says.

The 1967 Lanterman-Petris-Short Act came in the wake of a public outcry over the conditions of state psychiatric hospitals, where tens of thousands of patients were held indefinitely and subjected to horrific treatment, such as electric shock therapy and lobotomies.

The legislation, signed by then-Gov. Ronald Reagan, effectively shut down all but five state mental hospitals. But funding for a new community-based approach did not materialize.

Today, the state’s five state mental hospitals, including Metropolitan in Norwalk, have a total of 6,078 beds, compared to more than 50,000 beds in the 1950s. Of those, only 617 are occupied by LPS conservatees. The remaining 90% are occupied by those with mental illness who are

accused of committing crimes or have been convicted of them.

A February staff report for the county’s Board of Supervisors said the wait time for transferring an LPS conservatee to a state hospital last year was 394 days. The wait time for a specialized or subacute care facility, meanwhile, was 141 days.

Despite the intent of the LPS Act, one of the original authors, Sen. Nicholas C. Petris, said in a 1989 interview that mistakes were made: “In this overemphasis to get away from this tyrannical and oppressive system ... of incarcerating people so easily, we went overboard the other way.”

The act made it extremely difficult to hold someone against their will longer than 72 hours. As a result, short-term holds in California have risen from about 75,000 annually in 1980 to about 125,000 in 2018. At the same time, conservatorships have plummeted from about 12,000 in 1980 to 6,000 statewide.

Officials are hopeful that the governor’s new CARE Court model will fill the gap between 72-hour psychiatric holds and



Courtesy of Danielle Curtiss
Danielle Curtiss (right) with daughter Ava (left) and Rep. Grace Napolitano. Curtiss has lobbied politicians across the state to make it easier for families to access mental health care.

conservatorships. These courts would function more like a social service agency than a legal venue. Some are scheduled to start in December, including in Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Families, nurses, social workers, police and other concerned parties would be able to directly petition the CARE courts to enroll someone in the program, in which regular appearances would be required and services, including housing, would be provided. Participation would be voluntary, unlike the more restrictive LPS conservatorships.

If individuals refuse or fail to complete CARE Court requirements, they could then be referred for an LPS conservatorship.

Curtiss, who has supported the CARE Court concept, says she’s hopeful it will provide another option for families desperate to help loved ones. But she’s skeptical about LA County’s ability to provide the promised services that will be crucial to its success. Just getting the key players in her son’s conservatorship case to communicate with her has been a challenge, she says.

In fact, at her son’s most recent conservatorship hearing in February, Curtiss celebrated a big win for a woman who for years has camped out in administrative offices and pestered politicians on behalf of her son: Her lawyer persuaded a judge to order LA County and Kaiser to work with her to devise a discharge plan—including housing and care—once her son’s conservatorship ends.

“I know the end is coming,” she says. “It’s just a matter of time.”

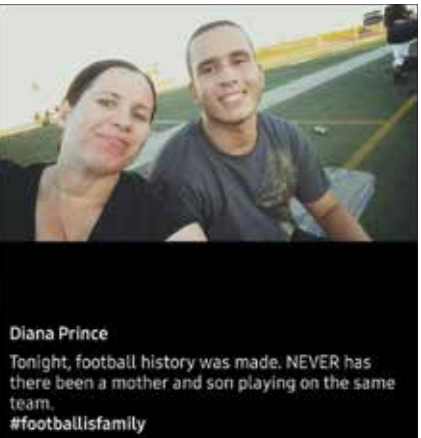
Asked what would be a best-case scenario for her son, she struggles for an answer. She would love for him to be somewhere structured, where he can feel supported but also develop some autonomy.

“My hope,” she says, “is that someday he can advocate for himself.”

She says she also hopes for a sea-change in a system that should not require those with severe mental illnesses to endure so much trauma before they can get help.

This story was edited by special projects editor Joel Sappell.

Photography by Thomas R. Cordova, with submitted art from Danielle Curtiss. ■



Courtesy of Danielle Curtiss
Danielle Curtiss, left, and her son in 2017 when he was about 18. The two of them played on a semi professional football team called the Wolfpack. “Football was something that helped him stay out of trouble,” she says.

Medi-Cal

Continued from page 3

information you need or forms to fill out;

- You can make changes, get information and fill out renewal forms online at www.benefitscal.com;
- Check the mail for a renewal packet in a yellow envelope;
- And if you receive a packet, fill it out.

They’ve also heard of people being asked to pay to renew their coverage, which Medi-Cal providers don’t do. “Watch out for scammers – there is no cost to renew your Medi-Cal,” Ahn said.

Romero said L.A. Care has used social media, a text message campaign and robocalls to let people know the renewal process has restarted. They’re also about to roll out more traditional marketing like bus shelter ads, and they’re partnering with several public agencies offer some in-person help navigating the paperwork.

People can also call the L.A. County Department of Public Social Services at 866-613-3777 for help, but the Los Angeles Times recently reported callers are encountering extremely long wait times.

Not losing health coverage can be especially challenging for people who move often or don’t have a computer, like the clients Imelda Bealer works with at Long Beach’s Lutheran Social Services.

Bealer said some of the people she helps are homeless or have been moving between shelters and interim housing, and they may not have a computer, email address or cell phone.

“When they lose coverage, they’re not able to see their doctors,” she said. “There’s just a lot of figuring out right now as far as the forms” they need to fill out.

Ahn said if people miss their packet and get disenrolled from Medi-Cal, or if their circumstances have changed and they no longer qualify, they still have options.

Those who lose coverage but are still eligible have a 90-day window in which they can apply to restart their insurance, and L.A. Care is working to connect people to other health plans if a new job or other life change means they earn too much to get Medi-Cal.

And L.A. Care has a community resource center in Wilmington, but Long Beach residents will soon have a closer option for help: The insurer is opening a resource center at 5599 Atlantic Ave. in North Long Beach on June 9. ■

Mental Health

Continued from page 5

the county already has,” Colopy said.

It could also require a change to state law, which currently directs state funding to counties, which then pass it along to service providers like nonprofits that city Health Department employees try to connect people with when they’re seeking help.

Becoming a vendor is possible, but it would require the city to apply for direct Medi-Cal funding to offer some services directly, and it would likely require general fund dollars to be put up as a match to receive that funding.

The department is nearly entirely grant-funded, and just 6% (\$11.5 million) of its \$182.3 million budget this year came from the general fund.

“It would be far more than that for us to run our own system going forward,” Colopy said.

Colopy said the city wants to focus instead on creating connections between people and providers and also improve how local providers are able to access funding, something that is difficult and can be confusing, the report said.

“Our goal was to leverage what exists,” Colopy said, adding that the city also would like to find a way to access

additional funding to boost its abilities. “The thing that showed up is that there is no coordination at the LA County level for the city of Long Beach.”

Providing technical assistance for those providers interested in applying for funding or grants is among the short-term solutions the report lists along with developing a decision tree for connecting people to services, hiring more people with lived experiences and partnering with Chance the Rapper’s “My State of Mind” project to be the West Coast partner city.

The rapper’s nonprofit “SocialWorks” runs the My State of Mind project in Cook County, Illinois. One of the program’s initiatives is a guidebook to help connect people to mental health services near the rapper’s hometown of Chicago.

Colopy said that making it easier to access mental health is almost as important as increasing the amount of services that are available for people who need it.

“People speak about increasing access to mental health, you think you just need to open more services, but there’s so much more involved,” she said. “The reason why we have so many folks that don’t have treatment is trying to work your way through what’s possible, if you don’t have someone else to help, can be impossible.” ■



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal

Jeff Levine, executive director of the Long Beach Rescue Mission, stands in front of a building that could be sold to the city.

City in talks to buy Long Beach Rescue Mission property

A deal could be beneficial to both sides as Long Beach tries to secure shelter space under its state of emergency on homelessness and the Rescue Mission looks to expand its services.

By Jackie Rae and Kat Schuster

Long Beach is in negotiations to buy the Long Beach Rescue Mission’s property at 702 W. Anaheim St. in an effort to further expand its homeless shelter network.

The city is currently leasing the site as a temporary homeless shelter through July. Shelter operations began there late last month, just before Long Beach’s winter shelter at the former Community Hospital property closed.

But both the Long Beach Rescue Mission and the city are looking for more permanent ways to help the city’s unhoused population, and a purchase of the site could help both sides achieve their goals.

Jeff Levine, the executive director of Long Beach Rescue Mission, said there are currently three offers on the table for the property, including one from the city of Long Beach, although none are close to the asking price of \$8.1 million.

Negotiations are underway, so neither Levine nor representatives for the city would speak about the specifics of a potential sale. But a deal could be beneficial to both sides as Long Beach tries to secure shelter space under its state of emergency on homelessness and the Rescue Mission looks to expand its services.

Current negotiations

On the city’s side, the benefits of purchasing the property are clear. Long Beach’s homeless population grew 4.6% this year, according to the annual homeless count. City officials touted the single-digit rise as a sign of significant progress after last year’s count found the homeless population soared 62% from 2020 to 2022.

Still, Mayor Rex Richardson acknowledged more work lies ahead. “While the slowdown in growth reflected in the point-in-time count is encouraging, we must remain focused on the urgent need to address the systemic causes of homelessness,” he said when the homeless count results were announced late last month.

The city’s current lease of the

Rescue Mission’s former thrift store is a small way to add more capacity to Long Beach’s homeless services network.

Levine, for his part, said he could not discuss the three bids on the table to buy the property, but the Mission finalized a short-term lease with the city as negotiations have continued.

The city is now paying about \$19,000 per month for the site, with Long Beach also providing funding for onsite security and transportation. Based on the cost of this year’s winter shelter, it might appear that Long Beach is getting a bargain—it’s less than half the roughly \$45,000 in monthly rent the city was paying for a smaller space at Community Hospital. But there are a number of reasons for that price gap, including the difference in locations, amenities offered and necessary repairs—the Rescue Mission property, for example, has a leaky roof, no shower facilities and lacks the semi-private rooms Community Hospital offered.

But the sale negotiations also play a role in the low rent.

The city is “in discussions of purchasing it, so the rental rate that was given was primarily an accommodation,” said George Bustamante, a co-owner of Coldwell Banker Commercial BLAIR, whose staff helped to facilitate a conversation between the Rescue

Mission and the city in February.

“Their main effort is to provide housing, so they felt it was an accommodation for the city,” Bustamante added of the Rescue Mission’s motivations.

It’s unclear if or when negotiations will wrap up, but the City Council would have to approve any deal that’s made.

Levine said he hopes the sale of the property will be finalized by the end of the short-term shelter lease. If not, he said, the city will continue to rent it on a month-to-month basis until the property sells.

Rescue Mission’s future

Regardless of who ends up buying the property, Levine said there are several ideas on the table for how to spend the proceeds—though, as he noted, the organization’s board will have the final say.

First, the money could be used for the development of Hosanna House, a proposed 15-bed facility for unhoused men with disabilities, in a strip mall on Anaheim Street. Unlike the organization’s Samaritan House, which also houses men, Hosanna House will be wheelchair accessible.

Progress to develop Hosanna House is already in the works, and the Mission says it already has enough funding from donors to cover three years of operating expenses. Construction costs are estimated at \$2 million, with \$1

Continued on page 15



LONG BEACH
Utilities
Water • Gas • Sewer

BUDGET WORKSHOPS

Fiscal Year 2024

CITY OF
LONG BEACH

Bid Opportunities

| Title | Bid Number | Due Date |
|---|------------|------------|
| Baggage Handling System Maintenance at the Long Beach Airport | AP-22-122 | 05/18/2023 |
| School Education Program | WD-23-090 | 05/18/2023 |
| Furnish and Deliver Aqua Ammonia | WD-23-096 | 05/19/2023 |
| Furnish and Deliver Hydrofluosilicic Acid | WD-23-095 | 05/19/2023 |
| Furnish and Deliver Sodium Hypochlorite | WD-23-094 | 05/19/2023 |
| Illn-Vehicle Mobile Technology Installation | TI-23-193 | 05/30/2023 |
| Contractor Needed for Contract Review | PW-23-234 | 05/30/2023 |
| R-7207 Long Beach Police Training Academy Project 3005010029 | PW-23-221 | 05/30/2023 |
| R-7215 Rebid: Fire Station 14 Workforce Privacy Project | PW-23-256 | 06/02/2023 |
| Holiday Decor | AP-23-199 | 06/05/2023 |
| FSR Magnetic Door Locks | PR-23-220 | 06/07/2023 |

Bidder Registration
To receive notifications of bid opportunities, register with the city, and download additional bid details, visit www.longbeach.gov/purchasing.

Auto Lien Sale Auction
3111 E. Willow Street
Long Beach, CA 90806
(562) 570-2828
<http://www.longbeach.gov/autoauction>

May 23 & Jun 6, 2023
Registration & Viewing:
8:00 A.M. - 9:50 A.M.

May
17

May
25

June
8

June
22

For more information
Visit lbwater.org/budget



Was your trash pickup day skipped? Long Beach says it's due to staffing shortages

The shortage is pronounced, with an average of about 12 routes unfilled per day. That means that on Monday through Thursday, roughly one-quarter of the city's 40-45 routes are unstaffed. On Fridays, that number shifts to about one-third of about 30 routes.

By Jason Ruiz

Trash pickup could be delayed for some parts of Long Beach as the city's Public Works Department tries to fill staffing holes that have been caused by illness, injuries and vacancies, according to the department.

The city issued a notice last week that certain areas of the city could expect their trash not to be picked up on its regularly scheduled day because of the ongoing shortage. Recycling, a service the city has contracted out, is not affected by the current staffing issues.

Diko Melkonian, deputy director for the department who oversees its environmental services bureau, said he's currently using overtime to help fill the gaps, but pulling employees from one route means that other routes are left vacant.

"It's like dominoes," Melkonian said.

The shortage is pronounced, with an average of about 12 routes unfilled per day, Melkonian said. That means that on Monday through Thursday, roughly one-quarter of the city's 40-45 routes are unstaffed. On Fridays, that number shifts to about one-third of about 30 routes.

The pickup dates typically start in North Long Beach on Mondays, then move to East Long Beach and then to Downtown by the end of the week.

But the routes are not equally distributed throughout the city. The



Thomas R. Cordova / Business Journal
A trash can on Broadway overflows as a man walks past.

department assigns specific routes to certain drivers, and if those drivers are out with an injury or illness, they're unstaffed.

The city issued a notice last week that the affected areas were in Central Long Beach, near Downtown and in Alamitos Beach.

Why certain parts of the city are being affected is as much about staffing as it is about the type of trucks being used, which is dictated

by the size of the alleys that they must drive down.

Tighter streets and alleys, like those near Downtown or in Naples, can't handle the self-loading trucks that need clearance for the mechanical arms on the side of the truck, which grip trash bins and raise them over the truck to empty them.

Those areas require back-loaded trucks, Melkonian said, which need two people per truck, one driving and the other loading bins' contents into the back of the truck. Those routes have been hit harder because the routes serviced by self-loaders only require one person per route, Melkonian said.

Friday routes virtually all require back-loaded trucks, he said.

The department is trying to ensure that the same routes are not consistently being skipped, but the limited staffing is requiring that some routes be skipped daily. That means other areas of the city could experience delays or missed pickup days, something that has already been reported by users on social media.

While the city completes the hiring process, current employees are working overtime, but Melkonian said that the city is also looking at short-term solutions like looking for other department employees to help with the two-person trash routes.

"I've got to hand it to the team, they're working very hard to get it done on time, on the day it's scheduled to be picked up," Melkonian said.

The city doesn't have an idea of when the staffing issue will be resolved.

For now, the city is asking people to leave their cans out at the street if they noticed they haven't been picked up, with the hopes that it will be picked up the next day. The department is asking residents not to call in and schedule a pickup until it's been a few days past their original pickup date if their trash is not picked up.

If you need to schedule a trash pickup, you can reach the Environmental Services Bureau at 562-570-2876. ■

Belmont Brewing Company, Legend's get permanent parklet approval—but residents say they will appeal

By Jason Ruiz

Legend's Restaurant and Sports Bar and Belmont Brewing Company received preliminary approvals on May 8 for their permanent parklet applications, but residents are expected to appeal the outdoor dining areas.

During a zoning administration hearing, the two longtime Belmont Shore businesses had their parklet proposals approved by Development Services officials, with stipulations like requiring outdoor service to end by 10 p.m., forbidding structures like umbrellas or heaters from being used and requiring signage that declares the area free for public use, even if the person doesn't make a purchase.

Parklets in the Belmont Shore area have been a contentious issue in the shoreline adjacent community over the past few years with businesses successfully lobbying for multiple extensions of the temporary parklet program as a means to help weather the COVID-19 pandemic. Some residents, meanwhile, say the structures are a public nuisance because they block sidewalk access



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal
Legends sports bar on Second Street has been approved to bring back its parklet but Belmont Shore residents have said they will appeal over the loss of two parking spaces.

and take up valuable parking space.

All temporary parklets were required to come down citywide earlier this year but the list of businesses seeking permanent

structures has grown. In Belmont Shore, that number is 13, with Legends and Belmont Brewing Company among them.

Residents again cast the

applications as a "land grab" that had little benefit to residents in the city and big benefits to the businesses requesting them.

"In addition, these grabbers get

Continued on page 13



Private Dinner Cruises
Premium Bar
Port Tours

All-Inclusive Pricing makes
Planning the Easiest
Part of the Trip!

The Best Destination for
Your Next Best Occasion
is with Spirit Cruises.

Let us Make Your Event
an Unforgettable Success!



429-D Shoreline Village Drive
Long Beach, CA 90802
(562) 495-5884 • spiritmarine.com
spiritcruises@sbcglobal.net

Southern California's Leading
Cruise Operator for
Over 40 years!
Specializing in Award-Winning
Events and Dinner Cruising



Courtesy of Vast Space
A rendering of the Haven-1 space station.

1st Long Beach commercial space station to Launch as early as 2025

By Brandon Richardson

Scientists, researchers and even private individuals could be observing Earth from the world's first commercial space station as early as 2026 following the launch of Haven-1 by Long Beach-based Vast Space.

A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is slated to carry Haven-1 to low-Earth

orbit as early as August 2025, Vast announced on May 10.

"Vast is thrilled to embark on this journey of launching the world's first commercial space station, Haven-1, and its first crew, Vast-1," CEO Jed McCaleb said in a statement.

Shortly after Haven-1 reaches orbit, the company plans to launch its VAST-1 mission, which will see a crew of four people visiting the space station for up to 30 days. The

Continued on page 14

AUTHENTIC ITALIAN CUISINE
Al Fresco Patio Dining
Catering
Take Out
Delivery

\$7 OFF
with \$30 purchase
Expires 6/15/23

ORDER ONLINE BUONOSPIZZA.COM

401 W Willow St. (562) 595-6138 / 250 West Ocean Blvd. (562) 432-2211

COLUMNIST: TIM GROBATY

For maximum profit in selling your house, hire a stager to ‘hip it up’



Courtesy of Kristi Faber Vento/The Faber Team

A Paul Tay-designed home in College Estates, staged by Housebird designs.

Take a look at your house right now. I’m gonna be generous and say that it probably looks OK. You’re not an animal; you keep things up.

If you want to be picky about it, though, there’s a newspaper scattered on the coffee table along with a half-filled glass of iced tea—or maybe it’s bourbon. There’s a dog bed in front of the fireplace and the dining room table is sort of a work-from-home office with a few notebooks and various work-related paper and pens along with a coffee cup with “I Hate Mondays” and a cartoon picture of Garfield on it.

Would you list it for sale the way it looks right now? It’s acceptable to you; you’re comfortable with it, but what would a prospective home-buyer think if they visited it or even looked at pictures of it on any number of real estate websites?

That’s why real estate agents will tell you to have your house professionally staged by experts who can both imagine what would be its best look and can make those ideas a reality by bringing in attractive furniture, artwork, rugs, vases, flowers and plants and other trappings. You won’t even recognize your place and may even have some regrets about selling once you see it in its staged form.

The value of staging

“When I see an unstaged house for sale it pains me,” says Realtor Kristi Faber Vento, who works with her mother, Carolyn Faber, listing prestige properties all over town, including some of the more stately homes in Los Cerritos.

“You’ve gotta try harder to sell your house. Staging always—always—pays off for the seller,” she says.

How much does it pay off? Plenty. One of the Fabers’ go-to stagers, Teresa Bradshaw, who specializes in coastal properties as well as contemporary and traditional styles, says, “When I ask agents how much staging increases the sales amount, they tell me they get about \$50,000 to \$75,000 more for small and medium-size houses and \$100,000 to \$150,000 for large homes. It’s pretty consistent.” That’s a significant return on investment for home-sellers, who are generally the ones who pay for the staging, which can run from about \$1,500 to \$6,000 or more.

Real Estate websites have plenty of examples of homes that are not only unstaged, but instead are seemingly anti-staged. Some are perhaps intended as visual disclosures that the home is fairly irredeemable in its current condition while others

just might be due to the fact that the sellers simply want to dump the place and don’t want to incur staging expenses to put lipstick on a pig.

An idealized version of your home

But for those who have a fairly nice home to sell, staging can make a remarkable difference, showing a home in an absolutely ideal light.

Staging “helps buyers envision how they see each room,” says Heather South, a Long Beach-based stager and owner of Housebird Designs. Among other things, she says, staging shows the possibilities of a home’s awkward spaces and niches. “We’ll take a funky layout and make the most of it so people don’t have to scratch their heads and wonder what they’ll do with the odd small space. Instead, they’ll see that it can be a reading nook or a wine cellar.” Further, she says, with an unstaged vacant and empty house, buyers will focus on problems, but with proper staging they can see the home’s potential.

That’s why stagers tend to prefer working with an empty and vacant home. “It’s like a blank canvas,” says South.

“Staging is easier than interior design,” she says. “It’s not really functional, so we get to live in a fantasy world of white couches and chairs that don’t work in the real world when you have dogs and kids running all over the place with dogs.”

The process of staging

Explaining the process of staging, South says that her crew of three measures the spaces in the house and then, keeping in mind the home’s architecture and the demographic of likely buyers they go to their warehouse of furnishings in Signal Hill and come up with a design plan and then box up and load everything from art and pillows and plants to sofas and dining room sets into trucks and drive back to the home, where they take about two days to stage he property. The entire process takes about a week, South says.

Housebird Designs can do several styles, but South specializes in Mid-Century Modern, a particularly hot form that’s grown considerably in the last decade.

South and her husband bought their first home, a rundown place on Woodruff Avenue before the Mid-Century craze started, and after months of hard work transformed it into a Mid-Century look right down to the horizontal wood fences that are now a staple of the style. The home, South says, attracted passersby who would frequently stop to take pictures of the house. Among these were Realtors Doug and Rochelle Kramer who are the



Movoto listing photo

This dining room in a home in Huntsville, Alabama could use a little tidying up.

founders of SoCal Modern, a collection of Mid-Century Modern listings and news.

At the time, the Kramers were selling the Cliff May homes in East Long Beach’s Ranchos neighborhood, but they weren’t in the high demand they are today. “Rochelle was like, ‘Wow what a great idea to take these ranchos and embrace them and make them look cool,’” South recalls.

So, inheriting some interesting Mid-Modern pieces from her mother’s home on the Peninsula, South began specializing in the style, not only in the Ranchos, but also in a similar Mid-Century Modern enclave of Joseph Eichler homes in the city of Orange.

Modernizing the art

Aside from Mid-Mod staging, South also does several other styles, including farmhouse and more traditional and contemporary homes in Naples.

When she started Housebird 11 years ago, South said that most staging consisted of little more than painting everything white so it looked clean. She says she wanted to expand on a sort of vanilla style and break the mold.

“I wanted to create a company that considered all the features of a home from its architectural style, to its paint colors, and finishes as well as the demographic to create a staging design that made the house make sense, let buyers see its full potential and how they would be able to use the spaces.” To add a bit of spice to a room they’ll throw in some touches like adding a guitar or a surfboard or some adventurous art into the mix.

“We call it ‘hipping it up,’” South says. ■



Courtesy of Kristi Faber Vento/The Faber Team

A bright Mid-Modern living room with parquet flooring, staged by Teresa Bradshaw.



Photo courtesy of Heather South/Housebird

A Cliff May Rancho staged by Heather South’s Housebird team.

Long Beach youth can now vote on new summer programs



Tess Kazenoff / Business Journal

Numerous local organizations discuss their proposals with youth during the voter fair on May 2, kicking off a 10-day period where youth ages 13 to 26 can vote on summer programs to be funded through Measure US funds.

By Tess Kazenoff

Youth ages 13 to 26 who live, learn, work or play in Long Beach now have the opportunity to vote on new summer programs with the launch of the first citywide participatory budget process.

Participatory budgeting, known as PB, is a democratic process that empowers residents to decide how to

spend public dollars, and in this case, youth will determine how \$300,000 of funds from Measure US will be utilized. Measure US, approved by Long Beach voters in 2020, provides annual funding for public health, climate change efforts and children and youth services and programs across the city.

The opportunity for young people to directly weigh in on the city budget comes through

the Youth Power PB Long Beach campaign, which is facilitated by the Invest in Youth Coalition, and in partnership with the city of Long Beach, the Long Beach Office of Youth Development and The Nonprofit Partnership.

In March, youth-serving nonprofit organizations submitted ideas for potential projects, and more than 65 ideas were proposed. Since then, selected ideas were

Parklets

Continued from page 11

exclusive use of extra property free of extra property taxes,” said Corliss Lee, an East Long Beach resident who urged denial of the permit.

While city staff members said that the two installations would not negatively affect parking—Belmont Brewing’s parklet would be on a public right of way that is not used as a street—some said that the May 8 approvals could amount to a precedent-setting event that could see all parklet applications approved, which could take away up to 18 spots in a community that is notorious for its scarce parking.

“It’s the sum total of these, and as other people have said, the aggregate total is important to look at,” said Brian Cochran, a Belmont Shore resident opposed to both projects.

The Belmont Brewing Company installation would be located outside of its main entrance, measuring

approximately 521 square feet and large enough to accommodate 16 tables and 35 additional patrons.

Legends’ parklet would sit outside its storefront where its temporary structure previously sat, but would be required to be built out of more sturdy, and aesthetically pleasing materials compared to the traffic guardrails that were used during the pandemic.

The 301-square-foot parklet would take up two existing parking spaces to create room for 20 more seats.

Legends’ owners would also be required to pay for the lost parking meter revenue used by the Belmont Shore Parking and Business Improvement Area Advisory Commission to pay for things like new trash cans, power washing of sidewalks and other maintenance along the corridor. Matt Peterson, co-owner of Legend’s, is the chair of that commission.

Tim Moriarty, an area resident, said he supported the projects because it would be good for business in the area and questioned the motivations of others opposed to

both the parklet applications.

“I refer to these people as ‘CAVE’ people,” Moriarty said. “They are citizens against virtually everything.”

The two projects can be appealed but to two different governing bodies. The Legend’s parklet could be appealed to the Planning Commission but the Belmont Brewing parklet would have to be appealed to the California Coastal Commission because of its proximity to the water.

A separate appeal window has yet to begin.

The City Council voted in January to amend the language in its permanent parklet ordinance to lessen the ability of the public to block a permit from being issued but added language that would trigger an automatic City Council hearing to decide if a business is granted a permanent parklet permit.

Businesses seeking a permanent parklet have to post a public notice and any opposition received during the required 30-day window that the

refined and further developed in preparation for a 10-day voting period, which officially began at 4 p.m. on May 4 with a voting fair at Long Beach City College.

Ideas that could receive funding range from art and music exploration, mentorship, academic and professional development opportunities and more—but each potential project supports the goals of the Youth Strategic Plan, which includes supporting health and wellness, planning for the future, community care, housing and transportation.

During the May 2 fair, youth and their families were able to speak with representatives from each organization and learn more about each project—which ranged from a culturally diverse mental health awareness and wellness program with Success in Challenges, to a program focused on suicide prevention and bullying through exploring entrepreneurship with California Families in Focus.

While Yohualitztli Ticitl of Birthworkers of Color, an organization proposing a doula training program, had not heard of a participatory budget process previously, she said she enjoyed receiving feedback and support from youth throughout the process.

Youth shared concerns about navigating the health care system as emerging adults, and the training will not only allow young adults to become advocates for others, but they will learn how to become advocates for themselves, their families and their communities,

Continued on page 21

notices are up would send the issue to the council under the amended rules. Those postings have yet to go up.

Julie Dean, a Belmont Shore resident who has been opposed to the expansion of parklets in the area for a number of reasons, specifically the affect on those with disabilities, said she wasn’t sure which group would appeal which project but said both would likely face challenges from residents.

The loss of the parking spaces where the parklets are located is a much smaller issue than how many more parking spaces will be needed for additional customers, Dean said.

“That means there are more parking spaces needed for 20 more patrons and more staffing needed to serve them, who also need to park,” she said, adding nobody has really focused on that element.

The appeal period for the Planning Commission is 10 days and 20 days for the Coastal Commission. Both appeal windows will start at the same time, according to city staff. ■

Nick the Greek replaces Pietris Bakery in Belmont Shore; opening set for June



A worker walks across the front of the former Pietris Bakery space on Second Street in Belmont Shore, which is being replaced by Nick the Greek.

Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

By Caitlin Antonios

Fast-casual chain restaurant Nick the Greek will take over Pietris Greek Bakery and Restaurant's Belmont Shore location with a grand opening targeted for mid-June.

On Feb. 11, the Pietris Bakery Facebook page announced it would be adding a new concept with "more Greek menu items" to their location and included a rendering of the new Nick the Greek storefront.

The chain has rapidly expanded over the past year with six locations in L.A. County and, in addition to the Long Beach location, another location in Marina Del Rey also opening soon.

Nick the Greek franchisees Evgenia and Aristos Mantas have taken over ownership and operation of the Belmont Shore location, which will be their second Nick the Greek. The couple, who live in Orange County, also own and operate a store in Huntington Beach, which is scheduled to open soon. They are looking to open more locations in the greater L.A. area.

"All the Pietris staff are staying onboard at the new location, and

Continued on page 18

Rocket Lab puts 2 storm-tracking satellites into orbit for NASA

By Brandon Richardson

Two more satellites are orbiting the Earth, this time over the tropics, following another successful mission by Long Beach-based Rocket Lab on May 7.

Dubbed "Rocket Like a Hurricane," the company's Electron rocket blasted off from the company's New Zealand launch complex at 6 p.m. Long Beach time on May 7 carrying two CubeSats for NASA's Time-Resolved Observations Precipitation structure and storm Intensity with a Constellation of Smallsats—or TROPICS constellation for short.

"The TROPICS constellation has the real potential to save lives by providing more timely data about storm intensity and providing advance warning to those in storm paths, so it's an immense privilege to have deployed these spacecraft to their precise orbits before the upcoming storm season," Rocket Lab founder and CEO Peter Beck said in a statement.

The mission was the first of two for the constellation, which will be composed of four satellites. The May 7 launch delivered the satellites to a unique orbit 550 kilometers above the Earth's surface.

TROPICS will monitor the formation and evolution of tropical cyclones, including hurricanes, in order to provide more rapid updates on storm intensity, according to a statement.

The satellites are equally spaced in this orbit to maximize the frequency an area can be viewed from the same angle, which is known as the temporal resolution. The two satellites can travel over any given storm about once an hour compared to the six hours of other weather tracking satellites.

"This high revisit rate aims to help scientists better understand the processes that (affect) these high-impact storms, ultimately leading to improved modeling and prediction to help protect lives and livelihoods," the company stated.

The four TROPICS satellites must be deployed within a 60-day period, the company stated. To that end, a second mission dubbed "Coming to a Storm Near You" is slated to launch in two weeks.

The May 7 launch was Rocket Lab's fourth of the year and 36th since the first in May 2017. Since then, the company has successfully delivered 161 satellites to orbit. ■

Shelter Bid

Continued from page 9

million expected to come from the sale of the thrift store. The Mission hopes to break ground on the facility in December, pending the sale and the board's approval.

The remaining projects would roll out over the next few years. Levine hopes that with the board's approval, the organization can lease a medical building near the Mission. This facility would allow for physical therapy, have beds to house both men and women, and serve as a place to address people's immediate needs.

Leasing the medical facility, Levine said, would allow the organization to better serve women experiencing homelessness by bridging the gap between living on the streets and moving into Lydia House, which is the Rescue Mission's 50-bed facility for women. He noted that currently, the majority of the women the outreach team meets on the street are not ready for a space like Lydia House, but creating a high-tolerance program would allow for women to come in under the influence and work their way to sobriety and housing.

If approved, the Mission would also like to expand Lydia House. This project would level the small house that currently sits between

the administrative offices and Lydia House on Pacific Avenue, just north of Anaheim. In its place, the Mission would build a three-story building with a total of 64 beds.

While negotiations are ongoing, it's clear that the sale of the former thrift store at 702 W. Anaheim St. will open a new chapter for the Rescue Mission.

"Just with our outreach in the first quarter, we gave away 1,257 meals, provided 1,900 care and hygiene packages, 732 people living in tents received clothing," Levine said. "It's just exciting for us thinking about when we sell that property what we will be able to do in terms of development of our own programs." ■

Space Station

Continued from page 11

company also secured an option with SpaceX for a second mission, VAST-2, in 2026.

Expected customers include "domestic and international space agencies and private individuals involved in science and philanthropic projects," according to Vast.

A SpaceX Dragon spacecraft will transport the four-person crews to Haven-1. Vast is not publicly disclosing pricing information, which will be made available to clients only under nondisclosure agreements, spokesperson Karen Sorenson told the Business Journal.

These launch deals mark the first time in history that a commercial space station company has contracts for both the launch of its station as well as a visiting human mission.

"A commercial rocket launching a commercial spacecraft with commercial astronauts to a commercial space station is the future of low-Earth orbit, and with Vast we're taking another step toward making that future a reality," said Tom Ochinerio, Senior Vice President of Commercial Business at SpaceX.

The space station provides science, research and in-space manufacturing opportunities, the company stated. It provides 1,000 watts of power, 24/7 communications and up to 150 kilograms of pre-loaded cargo mass, according to the announcement. Other features include a large window dome for viewing and photography and internet via onboard WiFi.

SpaceX will provide crew training for both missions.

Haven-1 will act as an independent crewed space station before Vast realizes its ultimate goal of developing a 100-meter-long multi-module spinning artificial gravity space station. At that time, the Haven-1 module would become part of the larger station, which will be able to accommodate more than 40 people.

The larger space station is expected to launch aboard SpaceX's Starship, which is the largest and most powerful rocket ever flown. The heavy lift space vehicle has been in development since 2005.

Despite Starship erupting in a ball of fire during its first test flight, SpaceX and other industry experts hailed it as a success because the rocket flew (made it 24 miles up in four minutes) and because the

purpose of the mission was data collection to know what does and does not work.

Due to some of the fallout, including concrete being blasted up to 6.5 miles away and a park being set on fire, the historic mission was not warmly received by all. In fact, environmental groups have sued the Federal Aviation Administration, which approves space launches, for the impacts of the launch. The company, for its part, is making adjustments for future Starship launches.

But SpaceX has time to work out

the kinks with Starship as the launch of Vast's larger space station is not expected for at least a decade or longer, CEO Max Haot previously told the Business Journal. Haot joined the company earlier this year when Vast acquired Hawthorne-based Launcher, which tripled the company's workforce from about 40 to over 120.



The company previously announced plans to grow its Long Beach workforce to 700 employees by the end of 2027, growth that will be welcome in the city following the bankruptcy of Virgin Orbit, which saw 675 people lose their jobs. ■



A SpaceX Dragon spacecraft preparing to dock with the Haven-1 space station.

Courtesy of Vast Space

Your Shipping Choices Can Lead to Cleaner Air and Safer Whales



Join Nomad, Summit Coffee, Peak Design, Way Basics, Santa Cruz Bicycles, Who Gives A Crap, and the Port of Hueneme as a Brand Ambassador!

Contact: info@bluewhalesblueskies.org

Protecting Blue Whales and Blue Skies

www.bluewhalesblueskies.org/retailers

Image: John Calambokidis

Beer and wine sales coming to two beach concession stands

By Jason Ruiz

Two more beachside concession stands have gotten permission to sell beer and wine once they open in the coming months at Granada Beach and Bayshore Beach.

The two stands are among the five concession areas Long Beach has worked to open along its coastline in recent years. The latest step came on May 4 when the Planning Commission voted to approve conditional use permits for the Granada and Bayshore sites.

As a result, the Alhambra-based, metal-themed Grill ‘em All burger joint will be able to offer beer at its Bayshore location, and Monty’s Beach, a Mediterranean concept with two other locations in Croatia, will be able to sell beer and wine.

The Bayshore location, which will be near Horny Corner, is undergoing various cosmetic upgrades to the existing two-story concession stand.

Diners will only be able to buy alcohol if they also purchase food,

and they’ll have to consume their beverages on-site, either inside the stand or on one of its two patio areas on the first and second floors.

Grill ‘em All co-owner Matt Chernus told the commission that he hopes to be open by Aug. 1 after an underground plumbing issue is fixed.

The Monty’s Beach stand at Granada Beach was also granted a permit to sell alcohol at its unique dog-friendly location. Igor Montanari-Knez, the founder of Monty’s Beach, showed commissioners the success of his locations in Croatia, which include lounge areas for humans and a dog agility course for their pets.

Monty’s location near Rosie’s Dog Beach will be allowed to sell beer and wine with its Mediterranean menu, which includes dog-friendly foods like pizza and specially formulated beer for canines, according to Montanari-Knez.

The location is expected to have a dining lounge, sun loungers and an ADA access mat allowing wheelchair users to roll out onto the sand.



Jason Ruiz / Business Journal

The Bayshore Beach concession stand is under construction, but once it opens, visitors will be able to drink alcohol on its rooftop deck or inside the blocked off area in front of the building.

“We’re not looking to open a bar but rather enrich the experience of customers who are dog owners,” he said.

The city said that allowing these stands to sell alcohol with food could help keep people at the beach who want to have a drink instead of requiring them to leave and come back, something that can be difficult during summer months when parking is scarce.

Both Monty’s and Grill ‘em All will have to end alcohol service an hour before their shops close each day, and patrons will be required to stay within marked areas while drinking.

The last time the commission approved alcohol sales, which it did in

July for the Junipero Beach concession stand, some residents appealed the decision due to its proximity to a playground and its location on the beach. The City Council denied that appeal in October, and Saltwater Deck began selling alcohol alongside its food offerings.

A fourth stand opened at Mother’s Beach last month with Louisiana Charlie’s selling its well-known Cajun food.

The fifth and largest stand has not yet opened at Alamitos Beach. The \$9 million, two-story structure has been hampered by construction delays.

When it does open, the operator for that location, Gaucho Grill, already has a license to sell beer, wine and spirits. ■

‘We let a lot of people down’: Southwest CEO pledges company-wide improvements during Long Beach visit

Executives said the airline is now in the midst of a company-wide campaign to modernize and correct the issues that led to the cancellation of thousands of flights during peak holiday travel, leaving millions stranded.

By Brandon Richardson

Following the unveiling of Southwest Airlines’ latest aircraft at Long Beach Airport, company executives made an appearance at a luncheon on April 28 for local businesses to hear from the city’s leading air carrier.

President and CEO Bob Jordan, along with COO Andrew Watterson, addressed the crowd, outlining the path Southwest is on in terms of its service in Long Beach and across the country. At the forefront of the company’s decision-making is the meltdown it suffered in December, Jordan said.

“We let a lot of people down. We let 2 million people down,” Jordan said. “There’s no way to skip past that like it didn’t happen. And at the same time, it’s not going to define the company.”

Jordan said that when he first took the lead role at Southwest in February 2022, he spent the first six months traveling the system, with visits to 20 airports, to see operations and meet employees.

“It was apparent we have work to do,” Jordan said. “There are a lot of things we do that just make it hard to do business with Southwest.”

The two executives said the airline is now in the midst of a company-wide campaign to modernize and correct the issues that led to the cancellation of thousands of flights during peak holiday travel, leaving millions stranded.

Behind the scenes, the company will update its infrastructure, Watterson said, which will improve communication, especially during extreme weather events. Southwest also is investing in the tools and staffing needed throughout its network.

“You have my personal commitment,” Jordan said, “to fix the things that went wrong so it never happens to you and your



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Southwest Airlines President and CEO Bob Jordan speaks during a plane unveiling ceremony at Long Beach Airport.

Aldi is coming to Central Long Beach

By Jason Ruiz

An Aldi grocery store is under construction at a shopping center on Anaheim Street in Central Long Beach at the site of a major fire in December that destroyed multiple businesses.

The Aldi is being built at the corner of Anaheim and Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue and was part of an originally planned overhaul of the shopping center, which included the construction of the grocery store and renovations to other business facades in the strip mall.

However, a major fire in December destroyed those other businesses, displacing operators who were open through the renovations. Crews have already started work on the foundation for the new 18,504-square-foot Aldi, but it’s unclear when the store will actually open.

In a statement, Tim Cindel, a divisional vice president for Aldi, said that they had no additional information to share about the new

store. When it does open, it will become the second Aldi location in Long Beach.

Plans for the store, as well as a conditional use permit that will allow it to sell beer and wine to go, were approved by the Planning Commission in August 2020.

Aldi is the German parent company of Trader Joe’s, but its branding is significantly different from those stores, which employ playful branding and Hawaiian-shirt-clad crew members.

Aldi, which now has over 2,000 locations in 36 states, is known for being a low-cost leader and uses cost-saving methods like having fewer employees per shift, charging rental fees for shopping carts, requiring shoppers to bring their own bags and avoiding brand names in its stores.

The new location is being constructed just a few blocks west of a new affordable housing development at Anaheim and Walnut Avenue. The 88-unit development, which will also house formerly homeless seniors, is expected to be completed late this year. ■



CENTENNIAL ADVISERS

PROTECT YOUR HEIRS FROM BEING TAXED & SAVE THE FAMILY HOME!

How to get things back the way they were before Prop 19!

WED, JUNE 14TH | 6 - 8 PM | Hermosa Beach, CA

Are you concerned about the implications of Prop 19 on your family's legacy? Do you want to protect your heirs from being heavily taxed and save your family home and investment properties?

If you answered yes, then we have the perfect event for you! Scan to join.

Event Hosted By
ELAINE KIM
Centennial Advisers, Investment Adviser

Special Guest Speaker
SUSAN SHELLEY
VP of Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

rsvp





Local bankers focused on you

for all your **Small Business Needs!**

INTERNATIONAL CITY BANK



- Can't find your banker? We're right here!
- Tired of poor Customer Service? Come see us!
- Our doors are open. Looking forward to seeing you!

Come See the Difference!

Paula Wihongi
Community President

Janet Nelson
VP, Community Development Officer

249 E. Ocean Boulevard • Long Beach • 562-436-9800



New zoning in West Long Beach to attract more commercial development

By Jason Ruiz

Two major corridors in West Long Beach are officially getting rezoned to allow for more commercial and residential development after the City Council voted unanimously on May 2 to approve changes that will update building rules in the area that were decades old.

The city’s Planning Commission forwarded the proposed zoning rules to the council last month, which will require commercial development in future projects on some stretches of the Santa Fe Avenue and Willow Street corridors.

A nearly two-year-old building moratorium was set to expire in June, which the council had adopted to allow city planning officials time to meet with residents and rework building rules in the area to better serve the community by requiring commercial space along them, and to create incentives for things like grocery stores and banks.

The new zoning will create two new zones along the corridor. One (MU1-A) will allow for 100% residential projects, while the other (MU1-B) will have a mandate that commercial uses be part of all future projects.

The MU1-B zones will be at intersections along Santa Fe Avenue at Pacific Coast Highway, Hill Street, Willow Street, Spring Street and Wardlow Road.

Councilmember Roberto Uranga, who represents West Long Beach, said that the vote was a “milestone moment” for the area that had been limited by existing zoning for decades.

“One of the reasons we’re not able to develop Santa Fe and Willow is there was no reasonable Land Use Element in place,” Uranga said on May 2, referring to the guiding document for development in the city that was updated in 2018.

While the Land Use Element was approved by the council in 2018, it will take time to formally implement

those changes across the city. Long Beach planners are in the process of updating zoning in Central Long Beach and recently completed a similar process in North Long Beach called “UPLAN.”

Councilmember Joni Ricks-Oddie, who was a neighborhood leader and member of the Planning Commission before being elected as a North Long Beach councilmember, agreed with Uranga that these plans take time to complete.

She noted the UPLAN process was started when she had zero

children and now she has two, but she said that like the UPLAN, the new West Long Beach zoning would help ensure that the community has access to basic necessities like banks and coffee shops, things North Long Beach lacked until recently.

“This is a future-looking document that makes sure that our communities and neighborhoods have what they need in the long term,” Ricks-Oddie said.

The new zoning rules are expected to go into effect before the end of the current moratorium in June. ■

Nick The Greek

Continued from page 14

we will be hiring more staff,” Chris Parisis, who is handling the construction of the new building and is the Mantas’ son-in-law, said.

A redesign of the interior is underway, although the Pietris logo remains on the outside of the building for now.

The 3,500-square-foot location will have a family atmosphere, modern, Greek-inspired decor and an open storefront. With an elevated dining experience, the chain seeks to “disrupt the fast-casual sector” by providing healthy, fresh Greek food at an affordable price, Parisis said.

“People are tired of burgers and chicken,” Parisis said. “Long Beach has Greek and Mediterranean restaurants, but they are not affordable.”

A beef or lamb gyro sandwich is less than \$12 (\$11.95, to be exact) and the most expensive items, a souvlaki or gyro platter, would cost you \$16.50.

The location was the logical spot to open the first Long Beach Nick the Greek, especially because the

neighborhood was already familiar with Greek cuisine. The Pietris family, who opened the bakery and restaurant in Long Beach eight years ago, decided to move back to Greece, Parisis said.

Long Beach’s location will be unique in that it will have a bar featuring 12 taps. Some Greek beers will be available, as well as wine pairings.

Parisis estimates about three months after opening the restaurant, they will be able to open a coffee shop under a separate name and entity but still owned by the Mantas and operated by Pietris staff.

The coffee shop will be a future buildout within the space, and the name is yet to be decided.

And while the beloved Pietris desserts will no longer be available, Nick the Greek will serve traditional Greek baklava and fresh Greek donut holes.

The restaurant will be open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., with possibly extended hours until 2 a.m., Parisis said.

A grand opening date has not officially been announced, but the family plans to celebrate with a free lunch for the surrounding neighbors.

Nick the Greek is located at 5000 E 2nd Street. ■



Courtesy of Chris Parisis

A rendering of the first Nick the Greek location in Long Beach, which will take over the Pietris Bakery and Restaurant location in Belmont Shore.

4 potential Belmont Shore gateway sign designs revealed



Courtesy of the city of Long Beach

Four potential Belmont Shore gateways signs.



Residents will get to vote on four design options for new Second Street signage through a survey that’s being distributed through the city’s Public Works Department.

By Jason Ruiz

When Bob Senske first saw the proposed replacement signs that could greet visitors to Belmont Shore on Second Street, he was “horrified.”

The red flag atop the blocky-blue lettering was something that people who grew up around the water would recognize as an oncoming storm, he said, and the overall design was more fitting for a strip mall than a beachside neighborhood corridor that’s home to local restaurants, shops and bars.

“It looked like it belonged in Valencia at some landlocked mall near Magic Mountain,” Senske said.

Replacing the gateway signage in Belmont Shore—a necessary task, as the old signs were riddled with termites, and one was hit by a car—has been an ongoing process for the Belmont Shore Parking and Business Improvement Area Advisory Commission, which has been discussing the issue since early last year.

Senske added that he feels

Now, residents will get to vote on four design options for new signage through a survey that’s being distributed through the city’s Public Works Department.

The four renderings were revealed at the Belmont Shore Parking and Business Commission meeting on April 27.

The options

When Senske showed up to a commission meeting late last year and saw the design that was under consideration, he knew he had to contribute.

Senske, a local artist whose family goes back four generations in Belmont Shore, made a name for himself capturing the city’s beach scenes on canvases and has even had his work showcased at Long Beach Airport.

He said the sign needed elements to acknowledge the beach, which sits just a few blocks south of the strip.

A seal was out of the question, given that Seal Beach is Long Beach’s neighbor, but some other sea life could work, as could an anchor, a boat or even wavy lines to indicate a breeze, Senske said.

After attending a meeting at Belmont Shore’s Fire Station 8 last December, he volunteered to design a sign that had more of an ocean feel to it with waves, wind or even just a revamped version of the old welcome signs that featured a sailboat and an anchor.

“You’ve got to show a proximity to the sea, otherwise you might as well go to Bakersfield with it,” he said.

strongly that the wording should be the same as the old sign: “Belmont Shore Welcomes You.”

Senske’s contribution includes his preferred “Belmont Shore Welcomes You” message with Belmont Shore in a banner, similar to the original sign. The words are laid out top of a beach scene with a starfish and an anchor above the banner.

Two other designs look similar to the originally proposed sign, which the commission appeared likely to approve before opening up the process to new designs late last year. One has red backlit lettering, and the other has white Art Deco lettering sitting atop a pole, but both have the red storm flag removed. Both read “Welcome to Belmont Shore.”

The last design looks the most similar to the old Belmont Shore sign, down to the coloring and font. However, the oval-shaped sign is also elevated atop a pole, like the others.

While the old Belmont Shore welcome sign sat a few feet above ground level on medians at either ends of the Second Street corridor, the new signs are being elevated so that they are more noticeable and to allow large delivery trucks and other tall vehicles to safely drive under them.

Residents’ feedback

When the designs were revealed on April 27, commissioners and residents alike shared their thoughts.

From requests for a smooth sign pole—and one that could double as a flag pole—to assertions that the community survey should be published with every Long Beach

news outlet, as well as across relevant social media channels, attendees seemed to still be at odds over the four renderings.

“One of the goals of this sign is to keep it simple,” Commissioner Jann Kronick-Gath said at the meeting. “I personally don’t want to jazz the pole up. You can’t just go put lights all around it. That’s going to look so tacky.”

Resident Ben Cochrane, who spoke during public comment, pushed back against only sharing the survey through the local media and the city’s channels since that would not garner enough input specifically from Belmont Shore residents.

Matt Peterson, a local business owner who chairs the commission, meanwhile, told the Post that the decision to gather public opinions from the community was just to help aid in the decision-making process. Ultimately, the decision lies in the commission’s hands.

“This is just something to let people know the direction that we’re heading,” Peterson said. “If we opened it up and it was necessary to get public opinion ... nothing would get done—we’d be battling around design elements for the next 10 years.”

Peterson added that, at this point, the process is “taking way too long.”

The commission had hopes of completing the design and installing the new signage before the previous City Council turned over in December.

The survey will be available in May, and the commission expects to discuss the results at its next meeting.

Assistant Editor Kat Schuster contributed to this story. ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Any development proposed for the vacant lot on the southeast corner of Santa Fe Avenue and Wardlow Road must include a commercial use, according to new zoning regulations approved by the City Council.

Here’s where Long Beach roads will be repaired over the next few years

The City Council voted to approve up to \$90 million in bonds that the city will use to pay for the purchase of a building that’s being converted into a crime lab, office space and a new senior center, along with repairs to city streets, parks and other facilities.

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach released maps last week of where it will make \$15 million in residential street improvements and where it will spend \$26.3 million more on large-corridor projects and pedestrian safety enhancements over the next five years.

Some of the projects listed in the maps are already underway, like the reconstruction of Market Street and Artesia Boulevard in North Long Beach, but the maps show an ambitious blueprint for where streets will be resurfaced, slurry sealed or have other pedestrian safety elements added over the next few years.

City officials released the maps after explaining there’s a deadline for the repairs, which are being funded out of \$90 million in borrowing the City Council authorized earlier this month. Because the money is being borrowed through tax-exempt bonds, the city will have to spend 85% of the funds over the next three years and all of it before the end of five years to avoid a potential \$22 million penalty from the federal government.



The street repairs were included in a list of projects the city says it will finish in time to avoid the tax penalty, but it’s unclear in what order these projects will be completed.

The bonds were issued against the city’s future Measure A sales tax revenue, which the city’s voters adopted in 2016 and made permanent in 2020. The 1% sales tax increase was supposed to fund public facility improvements, street repairs as well as public safety but the majority of the funds have so far gone to the police and fire departments.

City officials said that issuing the bonds was a way to address infrastructure improvements like street repairs immediately—when they’re cheaper to fix—rather than letting them continue to deteriorate. Last fall, when the bonds were up for discussion last year, over half of the city’s streets were projected to have less than 12 years of life remaining.

The bonds are expected to be repaid with Measure A tax revenue, which comes from a voter-approved



sales tax, and partially from the general fund, with a total of \$4.8 million in annual payments due over the next 30 years, according to city documents.

The funds are going toward a five-year investment plan that the Public Works Department submitted to the council in 2022 that is expected to invest more than \$520 million in bonds, Measure A funding and other grants from state and county agencies.

“That’s still not enough to repair all of our streets, all of our sidewalks and all of our alleys,” Public Works Director Eric Lopez said on May 2. “The overall need is in the billions for the city, but it still represents the largest investment in infrastructure we’ve made in a very long time.”

The \$15 million planned specifically for residential streets is just a fraction of the \$100 million the city said it plans to spend on that type of street over the next



The entire stretch of Clark Avenue from Del Amo Boulevard to Anaheim Street is slated to be fully repaved using a portion of \$90 million in bonds to complete Measure A projects.



five years.

According to a 2020 analysis of the city’s streets network, which includes more than 1,000 miles of roads, the average score of a city street is 56 out of 100. Over half of the city’s streets are considered “fair” or worse, with over 30% being rated as “very poor” or “poor,” according to city data.

Some streets will get a slurry seal, which is a water-asphalt emulsion that is applied to a street surface to fill in cracks and prevent moisture from entering the pavement. The slurry seal process could extend pavement life by five to seven years, according to the city.

Other streets could be resurfaced, which would extend their life by about 10-15 years. The worst-rated streets, which will be the most expensive to fix, would have to be fully reconstructed.

Some very-low-graded streets, such as Lemon Avenue between South Street and Artesia Boulevard



in North Long Beach, and the entire stretch of Clark Avenue in East Long Beach, are on the list of anticipated repairs.

Major projects included in the maps are the planned overhaul of Studebaker Road, which will add protected bike lanes, medians and other pedestrian improvements from Second Street to Los Coyotes Diagonal.

The plans include work on Anaheim Street between the Los Angeles River and Ximeno Avenue, which will add pedestrian refuge medians for safer crossing, upgraded signals and restricted turns at some points along one of the city’s most dangerous streets for pedestrians. Part of that is being funded by a \$7 million federal grant.

The maps also include early work to realign Shoreline Drive



in anticipation of replacing the Shoemaker Bridge near Downtown. Funding for the bridge is not included and a recent estimate of the cost to replace it put it at around \$650 million.

A spending deadline looms

Council members voted on May 2 unanimously to approve the bonds, which will need to be spent quickly because of their tax-exempt status. The city will have to spend 85% of the funds over the next three years and all of the funds within five years.

Long Beach could face stiff

Continued on page 22

City turns to broker to sell old Fire Station 9 site

By Jason Ruiz

Long Beach is hoping a broker can help it sell the old Fire Station 9 location after it failed to receive bids from anyone interested in developing the site, which was permanently vacated in 2019 due to recurring mold issues.

A memo from the city’s director of Economic Development, Bo Martinez, to the City Council said that the building has been assigned to a broker with the hopes of selling the property. The Fire Station 9 site could be listed within the next two months, according to the memo.

“The city is optimistic since we have been successful in property disposition using this process in the past,” Martinez said in an email regarding the potential sale.

The city had put the site out for bid in October but received no responses. Some of the uses the city listed in the bid were open space, affordable housing, a community center and office space, among other uses.

Martinez said that the site is currently being evaluated for price

so the city does not have an expected listing price for the site. It’s unclear if the building will remain or be demolished, Martinez said, noting that the city doesn’t know because there have been no proposals.

The 85-year-old station was built by a Depression-era program known as the Works Progress Administration and was one of the oldest stations in the city. However, with the city moving forward with a new Station 9 located just north of the old firehouse, the fate of the building has been in limbo for a few years.

Planning Commissioners considered demolishing the building in 2021 but ultimately voted to delay any action on the sites it sought more details on the potential reuse of the site, which wouldn’t include tearing it down.

Some residents have argued that more steps should be taken to preserve the site given its “historic resource” designation, but city planners said that the estimated \$1.5 million in projected mold remediation work needed to make the site safe would negatively alter



A man and his dog run past the now-defunct Fire Station 9 in North Long Beach.

the building’s original design.

Fire Station 9 is not designated a historic site.

The City Council voted in January to approve the plans for a larger Fire Station 9 to be built at 4101 Long Beach Blvd. The station, which is projected to cost upward of \$20 million to build, is currently in the design phase.

The new station will be able to

accommodate larger trucks and would provide a permanent home for fire personnel closer to their original service area near Virginia Country Club and Bixby Knolls.

Proceeds of the sale would go to the Economic Development department but Martinez said there is no plan for how to use any money his department might receive from the future sale of the site. ■

Summer Program Vote

Continued from page 13

Ticittl said.

Supporting programs that address mental health and wellness was particularly important for high school senior Amy Khim, who is a youth leader with Khmer Girls in Action, the anchor organization for the Invest in Youth Coalition. Khim is also with the participatory budget steering committee.

“As a senior graduating this year, I experienced a big chunk of my high school experience in the pandemic, and in COVID, and what happened after the pandemic, it took a toll on a lot of students and a lot of youth people especially,” Khim said.

“I think the high school years are really important to shaping you as a person, and we missed a lot of that,” Khim added. “Mental health and health and wellness in general for youth is really important to me, because I wish someone cared more when I was going through that.”

Providing youth with the opportunity to vote, particularly youth in marginalized communities, is extremely important, said Khim.

“So many times we’ve had decisions made for us that directly impact us,” Khim said. “We’ve never really had a say, and so I think it’s really important for youth to have a platform to share their ideas and opinions, especially for the decisions that impact us the most.”

Being a part of a participatory budget process can be a piece of



Youth can vote on four different summer programs that all support the goals of the youth strategic plan, which include supporting health and wellness, planning for the future, and providing community care, housing and transportation.

the solution for many issues facing youth currently, such as mental health or housing, said Poly High School student and Khmer Girls in Action member Auttum Phang.

While you have to be 18 to vote in elections, this process allows people even younger to participate and to have a voice to speak out about issues, Phang said.

“You can actually have the power to be able to use real money to get something that we want, something that could benefit us all,” Phang said.

“I really hope that there will be more opportunities like this later, and I hope in the future that I’ll still see this even as an adult,” Phang said.

Overall, 19 proposals for various summer 2023 programs are up for voting in the participatory budget

process. Youth will each have four votes and can submit one vote per project, and ballots will be offered in English, Spanish, Tagalog and Khmer.

Winning proposals will be determined based on the number of votes received, and funds will be disbursed to those with the most votes until the money runs out.

Each summer program is catered specifically to youth, and voting in the process will allow youth to get better access to what they need most, such as mental health support or help with transportation, said Maygan Ngeng, a junior in high school who is also a member of Khmer Girls in Action.

“I feel like adults have their own mindsets, I guess, as older people, and they might know some things about what the youth want, but

in the end, it comes down to what actual youth want,” Ngeng said.

Ishmael Pruitt of Project Optimism, a youth development organization that provides mentorship and other wraparound services to bridge the achievement gap, hopes to receive funding to extend programming to the summer time. With a focus in North Long Beach, participating youth learn how to advocate for mental health resources within their own schools, Pruitt said.

Funding for grants normally goes through a committee, “that you’ve probably never met before, maybe never will get to meet,” Pruitt said. “I think it’s time for our youth who are actually going to experience the program—they know what they need beyond what just the data says.”

Providing youth with the opportunity to vote not only supports autonomy, but teaches youth to have power in their voice, Pruitt said.

“I’m excited that the city has offered this participatory budget, and hopefully they do it again in the fall and other times throughout the year,” said Toi Nichols of M.O.R.E. Mothers. The nonprofit is proposing an art program which includes a variety of different mediums as well as admission to local museums and a community exhibition at the end of the program.

“I think the youth is really empowered by this process, and they’ve been so involved and so eager and excited, it’s been beautiful to see.” ■

Measure A

Continued from page 20

penalties for not doing so. Not spending the funds fast enough could require the city to pay a fine equal to 30% of the total interest paid on the bonds (\$73.3 million), which could amount to a \$22 million hit to the city’s general fund.

The city will have to stick to a strict schedule over the next five years to complete the projects identified in a staff report presented to the council on May 9 that outlines the projects that the city intends to spend the roughly \$53 million in bond revenue that is going to Public Works.



A city memo said that some projects could be skipped over or deferred to ensure that the list financed with bond money is completed in time. Joy Contreras, a spokesperson for Public Works, said that the department does not currently have a list of projects that could be skipped over to ensure the bond-financed ones are completed.

Contreras said the number of projects outlined in the plan is comparable to what the city completed during the first five-year plan for Measure A.

For the most part, the projects on the list are fully funded, Contreras said, but that could change if the cost of construction and materials goes up over the next few years or if the bids the city receives for the projects are over budget.

“These projects will get done, but the funding sources will have to be up to the city to figure out if projects



are underfunded,” she said.

Where the rest of bond money will be spent

Some of the bond revenue will go toward paying the city back for the over \$21 million it fronted for the acquisition of the old Southern California Edison building at the corner of First Street and Elm Avenue in Downtown.

That building is going to be converted into office space for the city’s Energy Resources Department, and it will also be home to a new crime lab for the Long Beach Police Department, as well as a new senior center.

The rest will go to Public Works projects, which includes the \$38 million toward street improvements. About \$7.5 million has already been allocated by the council for the Davenport Park, Studebaker Road and Artesia Corridor projects, but



the rest of the \$52.7 million will go toward other projects.

Other things like eight gateway signs at entry points into the city (\$550,000), swimming pool repairs at Martin Luther King Jr. Park (\$1 million) and funding for Latino, LGBTQ and African American cultural centers (\$1.6 million) are included in the plan.

The city is also allocating \$1.3 million toward a project that will put the first Blue Line train car to operate in the city in the middle of a pedestrian safety project along First Street. The project would stretch from the East Village to Lincoln Park and install new landscaping, sitting areas, shorten pedestrian crossing distances and develop the rail car into a museum or cafe.

County officials have already allocated \$5.5 million in funding for the project to Long Beach. ■

Southwest

Continued from page 17

customers again.”

For customers, Watterson said the company is introducing onboard power, WiFi that “finally works after a decade” and larger overhead bins. Jordan added that the Southwest app is in desperate need of an update, including being able to track flights and bags, and modify travel plans.

The moves are a win-win-win, they said, noting it should make employees’ daily work easier and enhance the customer experience, all while saving the company money in the long run.

“Southwest is not broken,” Jordan said. “It’s a great company. But we’ve got to get better. There’s an incredible amount of work to do.”

Southwest is the leading carrier at Long Beach Airport, now holding 45 of the airfield’s 58 daily flight slots. The company is likely to be awarded up to three more slots following American Airlines’ exit from the airport.

The company has expanded quickly since coming to Long Beach in 2016 with only four slots. It has since grown to include 24 destinations (some seasonal), including their latest additions: Portland and Boise.

Senior Network Planning Advisor Rhett Morgan noted that a lot

goes into the route decisions when growing within a certain market—namely, whether to increase daily flights to an existing destination or to add a new one. He did not give specifics as to where new slots in Long Beach would fly but said that “everything’s being evaluated.”

The continued expansion of Southwest at Long Beach speaks to the company’s dedication to the city, Morgan said.

That dedication led the company to unveil its newest plane in Long Beach on April 28: a Boeing 737 MAX 8 dubbed Imua One, which features a vibrant livery honoring the island state of Hawaii. The company offers year-round service to Honolulu and seasonal service to Maui out of Long Beach.

The event featured music, numerous dance numbers and drums, in addition to various speakers from the company and city. Kahu Kordell C. L. Kekoa, a Hawaiian church minister, led a blessing and dedication of the specialty aircraft. Kekoa even christened the aircraft with 25-year-old Oahu rainwater, mixed with water from Spokane.

“What we’re doing is connecting the world together with every route that this aircraft will fly,” Kekoa said, noting that one of the maile lei at the ceremony will remain on the aircraft, while the other stays in Long Beach. Imua One “kind of says, ‘Let’s go forward to the sand.’ So when you are ready, get on board an aircraft and get to Hawaii.” ■



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Southwest Airlines President and CEO Bob Jordan, left, speaks during a business luncheon at Skylinks at Long Beach golf course.



Brandon Richardson / Business Journal

Southwest Airlines’ newest aircraft, the Imua One, is unveiled at Long Beach Airport. The plane’s livery is an homage to Hawaii.

CLUB STUDIO

FITNESS IN A CLASS OF ITS OWN

STATE-OF-THE-ART GYM & BOUTIQUE STUDIOS
BOX / CS4 / RIDE / HOT YOGA / REFORM / REBOUND
CRYOTHERAPY & RECOVERY LAB

Introducing the next era of elevated fitness.

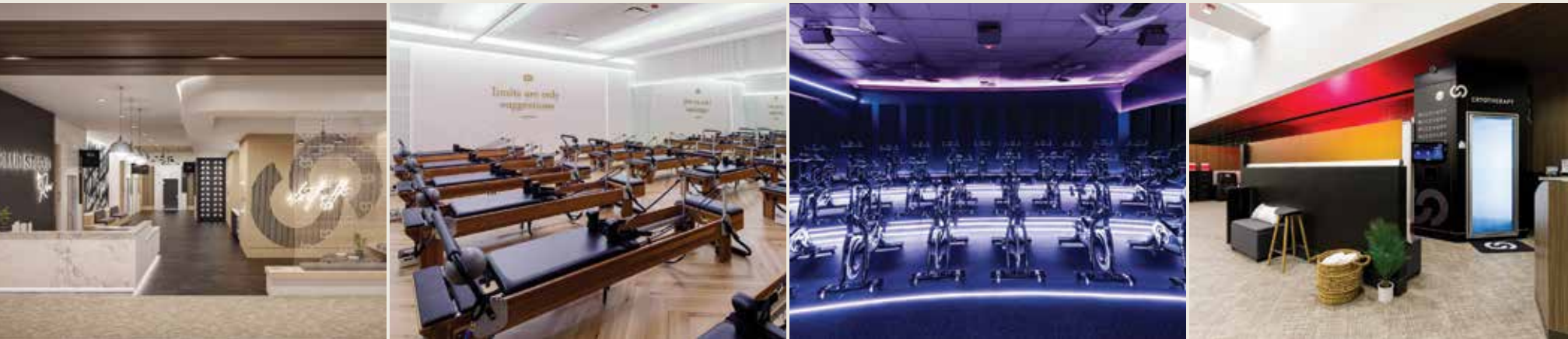
A cutting-edge workout experience that brings 33,000 square feet of first-class amenities, boutique fitness classes, and a premium wellness center together in one gym.

JOIN THE VIP WAITLIST >

Get the best rates before opening!



LONG BEACH –
MARINA PACIFICA
6310A E. Pacific Coast Highway
Coming Soon





from brain trauma to

triumph

It takes a village.

Charly suffered a fall while biking — a severe brain trauma that threatened his life. Until Miller Children's & Women's Hospital helped his brain heal. Our therapists helped him walk and talk again and our highly specialized pediatric team dedicated themselves to his recovery. Because we knew, to lift Charly back up again, it would take a village. So when we watched Charly walk the stage at high school graduation — supported by his physical therapist — we knew he'd only keep going.

Learn more.

millerchildrens.org/care

Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach | Cherese Mari Laulhere Children's Village
Outpatient Specialty Centers from the South Bay to Orange County

Charly, Age 17



MemorialCare[™]
Miller **Children's & Women's**
Hospital Long Beach