



L O N G B E A C H

## BUSINESS JOURNAL

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City, state leaders hash out a burning question:  
Who most needs profits from Long Beach's oil?

By John Donegan

Disagreement over who deserves the profits from oil being pumped out of Long Beach has pitted the city's budget needs against the state's and led to a flurry of lobbying as local leaders race to strike a deal.

The city has approached its state delegates with proposals on how to claim a greater share of oil revenue — which mostly goes to the state — for big-ticket items like the Belmont Shore pool and Naples seawall repair.

The city's representatives in the state Legislature, however, say any additional money given to Long Beach will come at the cost of state priorities, like health care, homelessness and schoolchildren.

In a call, state Sen. Lena Gonzalez implored city leaders to face the harsh reality that "every city in her district," as well as the state, is facing financial hardships.

"We're not going to be able to patch all the holes that you have in the budget," Gonzalez said.

Under the current agreement, the state takes 42.5% of oil revenue, compared to the city's 8.5% share as the designated trustee of the land. The remaining 49% goes to the oil operator, controlled largely by the California Resources Corporation.

A reasonable share of revenue for the city, Councilmember Kristina Duggan argues, is 20% and 30%.

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Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Island Grissom is one of four oil islands in Long Beach.

LBCC pioneers 8-week classes that  
fit into students' busy schedules

Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

The parking garage at Long Beach City College campus on Pacific Coast Highway in Long Beach, Monday, March 18, 2024.

LONG BEACH  
BUSINESS JOURNAL100 W. Broadway, Suite 310  
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By Kate Raphael

When La'Toya Cooper applied to Long Beach City College to pursue psychology, she didn't know how she would balance her education with parenting two young children and working full-time.

But LBCC identified her as a good fit for the shorter-format courses the college was offering, geared toward students like Cooper who are navigating busy adult lives amid their studies.

"I went to the orientation, and when I heard everything, I was super super interested," she said, deciding she could handle the coursework on top of her day job at an organization addressing youth homelessness.

In August 2024, she enrolled in LBCC's accelerated eight-week courses, which cover the curriculum of typical 16-week courses in half the time.

In recent years, LBCC has significantly expanded this compressed

*LBCC* page 8Long Beach  
facing budget  
challenges

By John Donegan

Long Beach will have significant budget gaps to contend with over the next five years — particularly after a major blow in November to the city's plans to recoup more sales tax revenue.

The city was already looking at a \$20 million budget deficit this year due to diminishing oil revenue, rising personnel costs, an economic slowdown and the potential of losing federal grant dollars.

In November, the situation worsened when a judge ruled the city cannot collect a higher percentage of local sales tax immediately. Rather, the city must wait until 2027 to impose and collect a full 1% of sales tax, which is what voters approved in 2020 when they agreed to make the Measure A sales tax permanent.

The decision by the courts — the result of parallel lawsuits filed by

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## COVER STORY

*“All we are looking for in this moment is strong partnership with our state delegation and a willingness to work together for the needs of Long Beach.”*

—MAYOR REX RICHARDSON



Oil island Grissom with the Queen Mary in the background

Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

## Long Beach's oil from page 1

That is one of several proposals that the mayor's office floated, with others seeking to claim the interest off the state's fund to eventually cap abandoned wells.

It's the "number-one lobbying issue" for the city, said Mayor Rex Richardson, as the state Legislature is set to return from its winter recess in January.

Long Beach's budget has for decades relied on revenue from the Wilmington Oil Field, the nation's third-largest reservoir that nets about 46,000 barrels a day.

The field goes about as far north as Ocean Boulevard, almost reaching the breakwater to the south, and encompasses some of Long Beach's most precious assets: the beaches, marinas and Convention Center.

The city's revenue from the field is earmarked for its Tidelands area, a 24-square-mile swath of ocean and coastline from the Orange County line through downtown Long Beach to the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

For the first time, the Tidelands Fund is expected to run a deficit in 2026, with future shortfalls projected to range between \$6.2 million and \$10 million through 2035. This is fueled by declines in oil revenues — about \$300 million over the next 10 years — and legislation that limits new oil drilling.

Losses could put at risk \$1 billion in outstanding coastal projects, including a deteriorating Naples Island seawall, a long-delayed Belmont Aquatics Cen-

ter and costly upgrades at the Convention Center.

But problems are not exclusive to Long Beach, Gonzalez said, citing the state's \$18 billion deficit in the most recent fiscal year. Early estimates project upward of a \$35 billion deficit next year, fueled by growing debts.

Coupled with federal cuts to health care and homelessness services, Gonzalez said the state's wallet is under pressure from subsidizing \$6 billion more for Medi-Cal losses, major clean energy projects and cuts to K-12 programs and community colleges. Telling other legislators to sacrifice those priorities for Long Beach would be a tough sell.

"What are our colleagues going to ask us? 'Well, what are they spending the money on?' Well, an Olympic-sized pool ... Naples seawalls," she said. "It's not like I'm not prioritizing this, or it doesn't matter. It does, but how do we sell that when we're cutting rural hospitals? How do we sell that when we're cutting all of these other services?"

Long Beach Assemblyman Josh Lowenthal said that reopening the revenue split formula could bring "unintended consequences," saying it could lead some state leaders to send funding into programs "that don't serve Long Beach's interests."

"Our responsibility is to ensure that any action we take protects the city's interests and those of the ultimate owners of these mineral rights — the people of California," Lowenthal said.

The state is also well behind its obligations —

about \$700 million — to save up for the eventual cost to plug wells, remove derricks and restore public lands after oil operations end in 2035.

City estimates show total abandonment and decommissioning will cost \$1.36 billion statewide, including \$205 million for Long Beach.

Gonzalez passed legislation last year that ramped up the state's annual savings for that future cost — from \$2- to \$5 million — but it's still not expected to be enough to meet the state's deadline.

Mayor Richardson, though, says he remains optimistic about reaching a deal, and it's premature to say "we've seen resistance."

"All we are looking for in this moment is strong partnership with our state delegation and a willingness to work together for the needs of Long Beach," he said.

He positioned the city's ask as a reasonable, short-term fix. His favored plan is to siphon a small chunk of interest — \$10 to \$15 million annually — from the state's fund to decommission oil fields, through 2035. By that time, Richardson explained, the city will have realized its bonanza as an entertainment hub, with a fully operational amphitheater and renovated Queen Mary, among other examples.

Without wanting to comment directly on the matter, the governor's office said on Nov. 20 that it remains open to ongoing dialogue with the city and state legislature. ■



## HEALTH CARE

HEALTH  
NEWS  
IN BRIEF

Dr. Robina Smith



Sunny Zia

**St. Mary appoints two new board members**

St. Mary Medical Center has appointed two new members to its Hospital Community Board: Dr. Robina Smith and Sunny Zia.

“During this transformative time in health care, we are thrilled for Dr. Smith and Ms. Zia to join our board to lend their expertise, insights and advice,” said Carolyn Caldwell, president and CEO at St. Mary.

Smith is a fellowship-trained breast surgical oncologist with more than a decade of practical clinical experience treating breast cancer patients, establishing and managing a Hereditary Cancer Syndrome High Risk clinic, leading a multidisciplinary breast tumor board and enrolling patients into late-stage oncology studies while in practice.

Zia is a senior civil engineer and program manager at the Port of Long Beach, responsible for overseeing millions of dollars in Capital Improvement projects. Zia is a first-generation Iranian American serving her third term on the Long Beach Community College District Board, having been elected trustee for Area 3 in April 2014 and re-elected in 2018 and 2022.

**SCAN opens care center serving Compton**

In a region where many older adults struggle to access high-quality care, myPlace Health, a SCAN Group organization, recently announced the opening of a new center serving the South Los Angeles area.

Located in Compton, the new 33,000-square-foot facility will offer comprehensive, low- or no-cost medical, social and in-home services to seniors with complex needs — supporting independence, dignity and improved health outcomes.

“myPlace’s expansion reflects SCAN’s deep commitment to drastically improve care that keeps seniors healthy and independent, especially in historically underserved communities,” said Dr. Sachin H. Jain, CEO of SCAN Group.

The new location will serve as a resource for older adults across the South Los Angeles area who have complex health care needs and often face the difficult choice of moving into a nursing home or institutional care setting.

myPlace’s PACE integrates medical care, social services and in-home support to keep seniors living in the community as long as possible. All services are provided at low or no cost to participants 55 and older who are eligible for Medi-Cal or both Medi-Cal and Medicare.

To learn more or to find out if you or someone you care for qualifies for myPlace Health, visit [myplacehealth.com](http://myplacehealth.com).

Health news page 11



Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Long Beach firefighter Brian Braasch assisted paramedics with a patient on the 710 Freeway before the patient was transported to a hospital.

**Long Beach adds new paramedic ambulance for first time in decades**

By John Donegan

For the first time in nearly 40 years, Long Beach approved funds for a new, around-the-clock ambulance unit — its 10th in the city — to handle mounting emergencies.

The unit, staffed by six paramedics, is expected to enter the rotation by the end of November or early December.

Fire officials said they are still in discussions on where to place the unit; most likely it will take the station of the part-time, peak-hours Rescue 2 ambulance, which floats citywide from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

It will run for at least three years.

The city estimates this agreement will cost \$29.7 million through 2028, as it will also include a 9% pay raise across three years.

Negotiations began in May, two months after firefighters, medics and union delegates lined the benches of the City Council chambers to air grievances about what they said was an understaffed and overworked department.

Out of Long Beach’s 23 fire stations, the city has long had nine advanced life support ambulances, meant to cover the entire city 24 hours a day.

According to Lamont Nguyen with the Firefighters Association, this equates to one paramedic ambulance per 55,555 residents, more than double the national average and far more than the city of Los Angeles (42,553).

An average rescue unit handles approximately 4,000 calls per year.

The infusion of staffing and raises, coupled with some language changes meant to protect pensions, is intended to help resuscitate an emergency medical service system that rank-and-file firefighters have said is in a state of crisis, with rising burnout and attrition rates that plague the paramedic ranks.

It also acts as a frank acknowledgement that the Fire Department’s primary focus continued to shift toward medical care, not just battling blazes.

This new paramedic unit — not including the

once grant-funded Rescue 2 unit — will be the first since 1986, when the city nearly doubled its fleet from five to nine rescue teams, according to the city’s fire union.

By 1993, the department had 23 engines, five trucks and nine rescues tasked with responding to 47,000 calls citywide.

Thirty years later, in 2023, the department had three fewer fire engines, twice as many calls and 167 instances where all nine ambulance units were unavailable for at least five minutes, according to city and union data.

When that happens, the city must rely on paramedic teams in neighboring Cerritos, Lakewood and Seal Beach.

Crews have said they respond to 16 to 30 calls a day — a workload that requires them to forego meals, coffee and sleep. Some shared stories of people who died because there wasn’t a crew available in time.

“We’ve been running more and more calls for the last couple of [decades], and we’ve never increased resources,” Nguyen said.

As a result, the department has become increasingly known in the region for farming talent — raising recruits through their first five years of service — before seasoned members transfer to easier, slower fire departments elsewhere, creating a “crisis of inexperience,” Nguyen said.

Neighboring jurisdictions, meanwhile, have begun lateral hiring sprees with online advertisements meant to resonate with those frustrations, according to Nguyen, who said the LBFD is on pace to lose five paramedics — and even more firefighters — to other departments this year.

“Basically, without saying it, they’re poaching paramedics from other departments,” Nguyen said.

The union continues to push the city for more resources; they want the part-time Rescue 2 unit expanded to 24 hours a day, raising the number of fully staffed paramedic ambulances to 11.

The ambulance crew, established in January

Ambulance page 17





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## REAL ESTATE

# This mother-daughter duo opened a proper tea shop in Long Beach. It began on a whim

By Ashley Bolter

Susan Harris never planned on opening an afternoon tea shop after retiring. In fact, the whole thing started as a joke.

"It just kind of spiraled, really," she said.

After working as a nurse for decades, she was getting bored and wanted to spend her time on something. Inspiration struck when she saw a tea set while thrifting with a friend. It sent her down a rabbit hole that eventually led to Afternoon Tea at the Village, she said.

With the help of her daughter, Abi Harris, Susan opened the shop in Long Beach's Lakewood Village neighborhood on Oct. 24. It's one of only two places in the city solely dedicated to afternoon tea — a sharp departure from their native England, where "tea is a way of life; tea is the answer to everything," Susan said.

For the unfamiliar, they hope Afternoon Tea at the Village is approachable.

"It doesn't have to be like a formal thing, but you can come and hang out with your friends," Abi said.

For those who want their experience with a little more pomp, they have fancy hats available to borrow. Susan said recently a couple of dads came in wearing baseball caps and soon put on the fancy hats on top of them.

"It was quite cute, actually," she said.

In the few weeks they've been open, Susan and Abi said customers have been excited, but many are still learning how to enjoy afternoon tea the proper English way.

Abi gave the example of one person who put cream in a fruit tea, which she said is a big mistake because the cream will start to curdle. She also gave the example of someone putting a sweet cream on a savory scone.

"We're trying to keep it traditional, but there are little variations," Susan said.

Regardless of how customers enjoy their tea, Susan and Abi just want people to enjoy themselves.

"It's not just about the food or the tea," Abi said. "We want people to come and have a good time."

They want their customers to feel special, too, which starts with hand-selected china.

Every teapot and cup has its own story. Many were bought secondhand from thrift stores or estate sales, and some were gifted by friends.



Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

Susan Harris and her daughter Abi Harris, co-owners, at their shop, Afternoon Tea at the Village in Long Beach

Customers can choose which pot their tea is served in, picking the size and design they like the most. Options range from simple floral designs to extravagant teapots that are shaped like houses or dancing rabbits. The simple floral teapots have been a surprising favorite for customers, Abi said.

The teacups all have different designs as well, though none are quite as extravagant as the teapots. Some cups even have mustache guards, a small ledge on the inside of the cup, so gentlemen can enjoy their tea and keep their mustache dry.

"I think when you do proper afternoon tea, you kind of feel special," Susan said.

Susan's favorite cup is white with a gold trim and a blue and yellow stripe lined with small pink flowers wrapping around the top. Because of the delicacy of china, everything needs to be hand-washed, which Abi and Susan said has been a real pain.

"We've become way more popular than we ever envisioned. We thought we could be very quiet and we could do this on our own, but right from the very beginning, we realized that that was not the case at all, and so we've had to hire quite a few people," Abi said.

When asked about the future of Afternoon Tea at the Village, Susan joked that she wanted to build an empire, but realistically, she said she just wants to succeed.

"We don't want to run before we can walk," Susan said.

In the future, Susan and Abi hope to be able to accommodate larger parties and would like to offer gluten-free and vegan options, but they're taking things slow for now.

Afternoon Tea at the Village, 4105A N Bellflower Blvd., is open Wednesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. ■

## Long Beach, JetZero reach \$50 million deal to extend lease, expand plane design center

By John Donegan

JetZero Inc. and the city of Long Beach have agreed to a 30-year extension to the company's lease at the city airport, on the condition that the pioneering aviation company invests millions into expanding its design center.

The agreement extends JetZero's lease through the early months of 2059, with an option to renew for an additional five-year period.

Councilmember Megan Kerr said the agreement solidifies the city's future in aerospace.

"JetZero's decision to solidify its

presence in our city means continued momentum for Long Beach as a center of aerospace excellence and as a leader in the next generation of sustainable, efficient aviation," Kerr said.

It also ensures \$50 million in improvements to the company's 16.5-acre campus on Donald Douglas Drive, including a two-story atrium entrance, a Customer Experience Center and a wellness center with a gym and cafe, among other additions.

Tom O'Leary, JetZero CEO and co-founder, said in a news release that the new agreement gives the company added stability as it fur-

JetZero page 7



Courtesy the city of Long Beach

A rendering of the planned JetZero campus at the Long Beach Airport



## Long Beach inks deal to let Sky Harbour build \$60 million private jet campus at airport

By John Donegan

Long Beach leaders approved a 50-year ground lease with Sky Harbour, a White Plains, N.Y.-based aviation firm, to build a \$60 million, five-hangar campus for private jets.

The company will lease a 17-acre lot on the west side of the Long Beach Airport that will be constructed in several phases through spring 2028.

In the first year, the company will pay \$29,778 a month — \$48,389 in the second year. Once construction is completed, the company will pay \$78,166 per month, with a 3% annual increase.

Once finished, the campus will include five aircraft hangars — around 43,000 square feet each — meant to hold up to 25 ultra-long range business jets. Each hangar will have a lounge and storage area, as well as office facilities and electric vehicle charging stations. An open-air restaurant will be on site that will be open to the public.

### JetZero *from page 6*

thers its footing in the aeronautical industry.

“Long Beach has always been at the heart of JetZero’s innovation, and we’re proud to continue designing the future of flight right here at our Design Center,” O’Leary said.

The company previously announced its plans for a \$4.7 billion factory in central North Carolina — one of the largest commitments in the state’s history — where it will build its marquee Z4 aircraft, a fixed-wing plane JetZero says will use 50% less fuel than traditional tube-and-wing airliners.

JetZero aims to have a demonstrator model tested for the U.S. Air Force by 2027, with plans to produce 20 planes a month by the late 2030s.

United Airlines, Delta and Alaska Airlines are all investors in the aeronautical project and have made conditional purchase agreements with the company for future fleets. Separate from the variant used by the military, the commercial jetliner would hold about 250 seats and fly at a range of 5,000 nautical miles.

“Long Beach has been home to aviation firsts for more than a century, and with this agreement, we are doubling down on that history and carrying that tradition forward,” said Mayor Rex Richardson. “JetZero’s commitment to Long Beach Airport means more jobs for our residents and strengthens our City’s role as a hub for aerospace innovation.” ■

Eric Stolpman, the senior vice president with Sky Harbour, said the campus is meant to capitalize on a national undersupply of hangar space.

Due to low availability, he explained, many of Southern California’s ultra-rich park their planes out of state in Utah, Arizona and Nevada, putting out of reach lofty fees and taxes that local governments could use for day-to-day services.

“By actually adding an aircraft hangar to the market, we’re rebasing some of those aircraft back to the place where the principals live,” he explained. “We believe that Long Beach is well-positioned today, but it’s also the future growth spot for

the whole of Southern California, L.A. County (and) Orange County for business aviation.”

It’s the third location the company has in California, and 19th in the U.S., with other campuses in Denver, Seattle and Phoenix, among others that track further east.

At the council meeting Tuesday, council members applauded the deal as a worthy use of largely vacant land. The lot is used for events like the annual Festival of Flight aviation celebration, while Mercedes-Benz uses some of the land for storing vehicles.

Councilmember Megan Kerr said she was happy to see someone inter-

ested in the underused lot. There will be space elsewhere for the Festival of Flight, Kerr said.

The Long Beach Airport, which has been owned by the city for more than 100 years, handles about 3.7 million commercial passengers annually that account for about 16,000 to 17,500 takeoffs a year. Last year, the airport generated more than \$63 million in operating revenues, serviced by Hawaiian Airlines, Southwest, UPS and Delta Air Lines.

According to the bid details, the city intends to lease out another parcel of airport land on the corner of Lakewood and Spring Street in the next two to three years. ■

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Up to the minute news.



## EDUCATION

# Long Beach State's Walter Pyramid renamed as part of \$8.5 million sponsorship deal

By Kate Raphael

After decades as the Walter Pyramid, Long Beach State's dramatic arena has a new name as part of an \$8.5 million sponsorship deal with LBS Financial Credit Union.

The agreement, which dubs the arena the LBS Financial Pyramid, was approved by the Cal State University board of trustees on Nov. 19. It will last 12 years. The funds, however, are to be delivered up front, allowing the university immediate access to the dollars that will bring Beach Athletics into a new era, said Bobby Smitheran, Long Beach State athletics director.

The money will specifically support scholarships, programs and facility upgrades that will "help us forge a path forward" and enter "a new era of college athletics" as the NCAA landscape has changed significantly.

Generous sponsorship deals have funded the pyramid before. The pyramid was built in 1994 to the tune of \$22 million, a price tag that forced the university to look for a sponsor, said Barbara Kingsley-Wilson, CSULB lecturer and the "unofficial historian of the university," according to her colleagues.

The university tried to secure a Jet-Blue sponsorship (matching the pyramid's cobalt color) and considered erecting a massive orange sphere (the 76 gas station logo), Kingsley-Wilson said. Ultimately, Mike and Arline Walter, longtime supporters of the university, "came to the rescue," said Kingsley-Wilson, donating \$2 mil-



Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

The Pyramid will now be known as the LBS Financial Pyramid.

lion. In 2005, the sports complex was officially named the Walter Pyramid.

Since then, Smitheran said financial demands have skyrocketed. A recent settlement agreement eliminates scholarship limits and allows universities to pay athletes directly through revenue sharing. Those changes create opportunities to attract new talent, Smitheran said, but they are costly. "Everybody's

trying to be as creative as they can in this environment."

On top of that, Long Beach State is experiencing rising costs across its budget — everything from "how our teams travel, how they eat, what gear they receive," Smitheran said.

"The college athletics landscape is evolving rapidly, and we need to evolve with it," Mike Walter said in a press release. Walter, former dean of

the College of Business and former vice president of Levi Strauss & Co., signaled his understanding of the financial realities precipitating the university to seek a new sponsorship with the credit union.

LBS Financial Credit Union was founded in 1935 and first operated out of Wilson High School classrooms, according to President and CEO

*New name page 11*

## LBCC *from page 1*

format and seen tremendous success, particularly among Black students and adult learners returning to school, according to O. Lee Douglas, vice president of academic affairs. "This is one of our biggest equity initiatives for the campus," he said.

Douglas said LBCC began shifting toward eight-week courses when "student success rates were not where we wanted them to be." According to data from LBCC's office of institutional effectiveness, about two-thirds of students were passing their courses with a C or better, well below the state average.

In fall 2024, the college doubled its offering of shorter format courses, which now make up a third of the LBCC classes — and student success rose dramatically, Douglas said.

Furthermore, Black and African American students and adult learners were self-selecting the eight-week courses, Douglas said, and performing better than students in traditional 16-week courses. The college took note. By fall 2026, LBCC plans to offer at least half of its courses in the compressed format.

LBCC has been a pioneer of shorter-format courses in California, Douglas said, and more colleges across the state are catching on. A group of California researchers analyzed statewide adminis-

trative data and found that in 2021, almost a quarter of community college enrollments were in compressed class formats.

Douglas said that LBCC is now working with other schools, including El Camino College and Mt. San Antonio College, as they expand shorter course formats.

LBCC is implementing the compressed format thoughtfully. Course requirements remain the same, regardless of length, but "we didn't want what was typically taught in a 16-week class just to be crammed into eight weeks," Douglas said. He added that professors are taking different pedagogical approaches for shorter courses: more in-class assignments, peer collaboration, and instructor and student feedback.

Kirsten Moreno has been teaching at LBCC for 24 years and taught Cooper's first LBCC class: English. Cooper said Moreno got students "boots on the ground running," holding them to high standards while also offering flexibility for the demands and challenges of their lives. "I felt very included and very seen," Cooper said.

"The students who come in, students like La'Toya, they are very driven to succeed, and they are managing a lot," Moreno said. She checks in

with them often and honors their lives outside the classroom.

Almost two-thirds of LBCC students are indirect matriculants, meaning they are not entering directly from high school. Recognizing that these students have different needs, LBCC is "actively seeking ways to remove barriers," Moreno said, "so that they have access to quality education and that they are supported all the way through the transfer process."

Cooper will graduate with her transfer degree in June, and she hopes to enroll at Cal State Long Beach next fall to finish her psychology degree and eventually become a therapist.

"I have lived experience of the foster care system, the juvenile system and the homeless system," she said. Therapy has helped her heal from some of these experiences, she said, but she added, "I never had a therapist who I can identify with, and that was troubling for me."

Now, she plans to offer the support to children and families she didn't have growing up. Already, she said her studies in psychology have given her more insight into her own children. "It's a beautiful experience so far," she said. ■





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# LBCC hopes a new \$102 million building will be a hub for student life and belonging

By Kate Raphael

Long Beach City College officially broke ground Nov. 19 on a \$102 million student support center, slated to open in fall 2027 on the Liberal Arts Campus.

LBCC Board of Trustees President Uduak-Joe Ntuk kicked off the ceremony. “It’s just a hole today,” he said, referencing the footprint of the future center, currently a basement of excavated dirt, “but you can see from the renderings that it’s going to be fantastic.”

The three-story Building E will be the “heart of this college,” Vice President of Administrative and Business Services Candace Jones said. The center will support students and foster connection through a range of services, including basic needs, a family center, student affairs, international and first-year student support, a social justice and intercultural center, and a new cafeteria, designed to feed an influx of students as more housing is built. All of it, said LBCC President Mike Muñoz, is intended to promote student belonging and success.

Several years ago, when LBCC conducted a campuswide survey, only 49% of students reported feeling that they mattered or belonged at the college, a statistic that “blew my mind,” Muñoz said. In particular, he added, the survey showed students found the physical space unwelcoming: While the grounds were beautiful, students said, the stark white walls inside felt sterile.

“Students didn’t necessarily see themselves in the buildings that they were walking through,” he said. It was a wake-up call for Muñoz, who initiated a campaign to shift the campus culture and create spaces for the student community. In the last two years, student-reported belonging has risen to 92%. Muñoz said students who graduated years ago tell him that LBCC feels far more welcoming now than it did 10 years ago.

The campus center is core to that mission, said Muñoz, who navigated his own community college experience as a single father. “We’re transforming how we center some of the more marginalized students” on campus — everyone from veterans to formerly incarcerated students to student-parents, he said.

This plan has been years in the making, and the budget has grown significantly from early estimates. Jeff Connell, associate vice president of capital planning and facilities, attributed the larger budget to market forces as well as design changes — increased square footage, the addition



Courtesy LBCC

Renderings show the exterior and interior of Building E planned for Long Beach City College’s Liberal Arts Campus.

of glass and steel to create more open spaces — aimed to be responsive to student needs and input.

Measure LB, a bond measure approved by more than 60% of Long Beach voters in 2016, will fund the project; \$450 million remains in Measure LB bonds, Connell said.

From student input to sustainability, the college is rethinking “physical space beyond just pretty landscapes and Spanish architecture,” Muñoz said. A huge part of the design and revision process was the solicitation of

direct student feedback through user groups, he said. Even the building’s staircases reflect students’ requests for an open concept and spaces to congregate.

Priiince Bass, who entered LBCC as a homeless student and is now the Associated Student Body president, expressed tremendous excitement on behalf of the student body, especially for the space for student parents, which he said the LBCC community advocated for.

The groundbreaking event and the

way the college has approached the design give him “hope that the school is invested in our future,” he said.

Ina-Marie Timbo, a biology student who first started at LBCC in 2017, said she enjoyed watching the project evolve over time, even though she likely won’t be at the college when the new building opens in 2027. “Maybe I’ll come back in two years” to see it completed, she said. Until then, she’ll observe its construction piece by piece. ■



## Health news from page 4

### MemorialCare appoints new medical directors

MemorialCare Medical Group has appointed four physicians as medical directors: Dr. Rachael Lopez, medical director of Obstetrics and Gynecology; Dr. Irina Sachelarie, medical director of Hematology-Oncology; Dr. Babak Firoozi, medical director of Gastroenterology; and Dr. Susan Lee, medical director of Risk Adjustment.

The physicians will guide key areas of specialty and lead initiatives to improve care coordination, standardize clinical protocols and support physician engagement.

“At MemorialCare Medical Group, advancing value-based primary care is at the heart of everything we do,” Dr. Tanya Dansky, senior medical director, said in a statement. “These new medical directors bring diverse perspectives and deep experience that will enhance our ability to deliver coordinated, patient-centered care. Their leadership will be key to advancing our primary care strategy — improving continuity, promoting prevention and driving better outcomes for every individual and family we care for.”

### Long Beach launches Early Childhood Mental Health Program

Long Beach’s Department of Health and Human Services and local early childhood organizations have launched a new mental health program to develop training and guid-

ance for caregivers of children dealing with emotional issues.

Through June 2026, the Early Childhood Mental Health Program will provide:

- One-on-one consultations to help child care providers address children’s emotional and developmental needs
- Professional development opportunities to expand knowledge and strengthen early childhood education practices
- Parent workshops to equip families with tools and strategies to support children’s well-being at home.

“This investment allows the Health Department to build lasting support for caregivers, educators and families,” Alison King, director of the Department of Health and Human Services, said in a statement.

With more than 30,000 children ages 0 to 5 living in Long Beach, caregivers play a vital role in supporting families and the local economy, city officials said.

Funding for the Early Childhood Mental Health Program comes from a \$1.3 million, 18-month grant awarded in January by the California Youth Behavioral Health Initiative. The grant, awarded through a competitive process, will expire June 30, 2026.

For more information visit [long-beach.gov/ECEprogram](http://long-beach.gov/ECEprogram). ■

## New name from page 8

Sean Hardeman. The company has a history of generous donations to the university, according to the CSU Committee on Institutional Advancement.

LBS Financial will provide the funding upfront, allowing the university to use the money immediately. The Campus Activities Fund will receive \$850,000, benefitting all students. The remainder of the gift will be dedicated to improving the student-athlete experience, Smitheran said.

Some money may go to much-needed facility upgrades, Smitheran said.

The Walter Pyramid has a history of structural problems, including a leaky roof that has forced Long Beach State to move basketball games and a partial ceiling collapse earlier this year. The university is undertaking a Pyramid Facility Improvement Project and conducting studies to understand the aging building’s roofing challenges.

But the university indicated that the bulk of the funding will be allocated to enhanced scholarship support. “Student athletes are our

north star,” Smitheran said. He said Beach Athletics will look at all facets of the student-athlete experience and determine what investments will have the greatest impact, both short and long term.

Smitheran said he has solicited student input via the Student Athlete Activities Committee, Leadership Council and end-of-semester surveys, which revealed unique and diverse needs across programs ranging from gear to nutrition to facilities.

Smitheran characterized the sponsorship as “tremendously exciting,” but one alum, Lori Peacock, reflected some disappointment about the name change. The pyramid “has so much history, and it’s just a shame,” she said. “Times change.”

Yet the Walters’ impact on the university, which CSULB President Andrew Jones called “as iconic as the pyramid facility itself,” will still be honored. The CSU Committee on Institutional Advancement has indicated that a new naming, elsewhere on campus, is in the works. ■

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# SHOP LONG BEACH HOLIDAY

## Give gifts that mean more

This holiday season, skip the ordinary and discover gifts that tell a story. The MOLAA Store, both at the Museum of Latin American Art in Long Beach and online, offers a curated selection of artful, handcrafted pieces inspired by the vibrant creativity of Latin America.

From bold jewelry made by artisans in Guatemala and Argentina, to beautifully designed accessories from Mexico and Ecuador, to home decor, toys, books and exhibition catalogs, every item is chosen with intention and cultural richness in mind.

Shopping at the MOLAA Store means finding gifts with heart: pieces that celebrate heritage, craft and imagination. Many of our products are made by Latin American artists whose work directly benefits from your purchase. Others highlight the visual languages, materials and traditions that define modern and contemporary Latin American and Latinx art.

But your holiday shopping also goes further. Every purchase supports MOLAA's mission — helping fund educational programs, community events, exhibitions and partnerships that bring world-class art experiences to Long Beach. When you shop with us, you are uplifting artists, supporting cultural exchange and fueling museum programs that serve local



schools, families and visitors year-round.

Whether you are shopping for a friend, a colleague, a child or the person who already “has everything,” you will find something unique, meaningful and full of personality at the MOLAA Store.

Support artists. Support community.

## Give them an experience they'll never forget at Hotel Maya

This holiday season, give your loved ones something truly unforgettable: the gift of

relaxation, sunshine and stunning waterfront views at Hotel Maya and Fuego, Long Beach's premier Latin-inspired coastal escape!

Surprise friends and family with a Hotel Maya or Fuego gift card, perfect for a weekend getaway, sunset dining or handcrafted cocktails overlooking the Queen Mary. Whether it's brunch with a view, a romantic retreat or a staycation filled with flavor and fun, it's the perfect gift that's always the right size!

Plus, take advantage of our biggest savings of the year during Black Friday through Travel Tuesday! Enjoy 30% off our best available rates and complimentary parking when you book directly on our website. Rates are available for stays throughout 2026!

You can plan that much-needed escape well into the new year! Unwrap a little coastal magic this season, because memories last longer than wrapping paper!

## The Village Cookie Shoppe: Fresh-baked treats with a purpose

If you're looking to satisfy your sweet tooth and support a great cause, The Village Cookie Shoppe specializes in fresh-baked cookies delivered to your door. A social enterprise of Mental Health America of Los Angeles (MHALA), the bakery has become a local favorite for its scratch-made cookies, holiday boxes and beautifully assembled party platters — all available to order online!

Every batch is baked by members of MHALA's workforce development program,

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# GIFT GUIDE



*The Village Cookie Shoppe*

giving individuals living with mental health needs real-world job training and a pathway to long-term employment. When you place an order — whether it's a classic dozen, a gift box or cookie favors for your next celebration — you're not just buying treats. You're investing directly in people building skills, confidence and community.

The Village Cookie Shoppe is a favorite for office orders, host gifts and holiday gatherings. Orders for Thanksgiving and Christmas tend to go quickly, so early ordering is encouraged (later orders may deliver after the New Year).

Order online or learn more at [village-cookieshoppe.org](http://village-cookieshoppe.org).

## Shop, dine and sip in Downtown Long Beach this holiday season

Experience the holidays in Downtown Long Beach, where every neighborhood brings its own mix of creativity, culture and coastal energy. From the artistry of the East Village to the buzz of Pine & Promenade, to the waterfront charm of Shoreline Village, downtown offers the kind of discoveries that make gift-giving feel exciting.

Here, shopping small leads to big finds. Explore locally owned boutiques, indie galleries, vintage gems and waterfront shops filled with gifts that surprise and delight. Pick

up handcrafted jewelry, sustainable fashion, artisan décor and locally made treats — all created by the people who give Long Beach its unmistakable character.

Make a day of it: Sip a craft cocktail, warm up with a local roast, catch the ocean breeze and wander beneath festive lights that make the season feel alive. Every stop, every shop,

every moment supports the community that keeps Downtown Long Beach vibrant and full of creative energy.

Find something unexpected. Support your city. Shop small in Downtown Long Beach.

Visit [dtlb.org/shop](http://dtlb.org/shop) for more info.

*Gift Guide continues on page 14*

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OPPOSITE OF ORDINARY





SHOP LONG BEACH

## HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

## Celebrate local: Gift consciously. Shop small in the East Village Arts District

Step into the East Village Arts District — where creativity lives on every corner and holiday shopping feels anything but ordinary. Explore local boutiques, artisan-made goods and self-care spaces that make every purchase personal.

Invest in creativity and community. Every handcrafted ring, locally designed outfit, sustainable good and wellness experience helps keep the neighborhood's artistic soul alive.

Discover inspired gifts, from vintage finds and handmade jewelry to minimalist apparel and art that tells a story. Treat yourself, too, with a visit to one of the neighborhood's salons, barbers or wellness studios.

This season, shop small and experience the Opposite of Ordinary in Downtown Long Beach. Visit [dtlb.org/shop](http://dtlb.org/shop) for more info.

*Shop Small in the East Village Arts District  
for the Holidays!*

*Pictured: MAKE Collectives at 430 E. 1st St.*

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DOWNTOWN LONG BEACH ALLIANCE | @DTLBAlliance | DowntownLongBeach | dtlb.org | OPPOSITE OF ORDINARY

## Experience the joy of the holidays!

Dec. 5: Jarabe Mexicano - A Bordenño Soul Christmas

Dec. 6: David Benoit - A Tribute to Charlie Brown Christmas

Dec. 17-18: A Broadway Holiday with David Burnham

Jarabe Mexicano's A Bordenño Soul Christmas (Dec. 5) is a spirited evening of upbeat cumbia, rock 'n' roll, Mexican folk and more. Perfect for the whole family, this celebration includes a Spanish rendition of Schubert's "Ave Maria" in honor of Mexico's Our Lady of Guadalupe. Tickets are only \$15!

Don't miss David Benoit - A Tribute to Charlie Brown Christmas (Dec. 6) as the jazz pianist performs cherished Vince Guaraldi tunes from the beloved Peanuts special, along with Benoit's own holiday favorites. Vocalist Courtney Fortune and The All-American Boys Chorus join the festivities in this heart-warming holiday concert.

Take a trip down memory lane in A Broadway Holiday with David Burnham (Dec. 17-18), as the Broadway star spreads holiday cheer with festive favorites from Broadway, film, and television — including classics like "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" and "O Holy Night." Performed on our Cabaret stage!

### Tickets make a great gift!

Surprise the ones you love with a gift to a Carpenter Center performance!

The Peking Acrobats (Jan. 17) wow with their awe-inspiring artistry and agility as they capture the pageantry of a Chinese carnival. Jazz fans will be thrilled to see Miles Electric Band (Jan. 30) as they pay homage to the jazz legend's innovations in this Miles Davis Centennial celebration.

**Celebrate the Holidays  
at the CARPENTER CENTER**

**DAVID BENOIT** A TRIBUTE TO **CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS** **DEC 06**

**A.I.M** BY KYLE ABRAHAM **DEC 13**  
Featuring Jermaine Spivey's *In the act of undoing*  
co-commissioned by the Carpenter Center

**A BROADWAY HOLIDAY** WITH DAVID BURNHAM **DEC 17-18**

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**THE PEKING ACROBATS** **JAN 17**

CELEBRATING THE MILES DAVIS CENTENNIAL  
WITH **MILES ELECTRIC BAND** **JAN 30**





# Long Beach abandons curfew on 2nd Street bars

By Jacob Sisneros

Long Beach will look for ways to boost police presence in Belmont Shore and better regulate alcohol-sellers citywide, but officials will not impose a yearlong midnight curfew on Second Street bars.

The decision came after calls for more intervention following complaints of lax enforcement and a fatal shooting near a Belmont Shore. Residents said something needed to be done about intoxicated, unruly crowds that spill over into their neighborhood.

In the past two years, resident Mike Anderson said, a drunk driver crashed through the brick wall guarding his front yard, and both of his adult children had their parked cars damaged by hit-and-run drivers.

In another case, Anderson said he walked out to a car parked in front of his house that was blaring music, and when he asked the two men in the car if they could lower the volume, one flashed a gun and told Anderson to mind his own business.

He was one of more than 20 neighbors and business owners who demanded action from the City Council. The push for a crackdown came after the killing of 32-year-old Jeremy Spears, who police said was in an altercation at a bar before his death. It was the third killing in two years on or near Second Street.

In response, the area's city council member, Kristina Duggan, proposed exploring a temporary midnight curfew for bars, boosting DUI enforcement, studying the cost of reestablishing a Belmont Shore police substation, and targeting public drinking and street vending, which she said encourages people to linger after last call.

Duggan said she visited Second Street late at night recently and saw "at least 20" people with open alcohol containers. She pressed Long Beach Police Chief Wally Hebeish on why his officers didn't cite people for public drinking that night.

Hebeish promised to look into it, but said officers cite at their own discretion.

Duggan said the widespread public drinking, unregulated street vending and prevalence of people blaring loud music have led to "unmanaged crowds of intoxicated people in public spaces for extended



Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

People walk along Second Street in Long Beach.

periods, creating opportunities for conflict."

She proposed a yearlong curfew for any businesses that sell alcohol along Second Street while the city works out a longer-term plan, but she agreed to scrap that idea when it received pushback. City staff, she said, told her it would take months to implement, and several City Council members said any plan needed to apply citywide, not just on Second Street.

"You're right — and your residents have shared here — Belmont shore is a special place, but the truth is our entire city is also a special place," District 8 Councilmember Tunua Thrash-Ntuk said.

She said gun violence was not isolated to Belmont Shore, pointing out that there have been 11 homicides in the city's northern police division this

year compared to one in its eastern division.

"Our response to this can't be piecemeal," she said. "We can not be siloed in how we respond."

Meanwhile, the four bars in Belmont Shore that currently stay open until 2 a.m. — Shannon's Bayshore Saloon, Dogz Bar & Grill, Legends Restaurant & Sports Bar and Panama Joe's — have agreed to voluntarily close each night at midnight.

The bars plan to resume "normal operations" after Dec. 7, said John Edmond, a spokesman hired by the bars. Their owners are exploring implementing universal safety measures and staggered closing times to mitigate some of the safety concerns, Edmond said. ■

## A look at new laws impacting business in 2026

### Staff report

Businesses should start preparing now for a raft of new laws taking effect Jan. 1, 2026 that impact job announcements, layoffs, "gig" workers in construction trades and more.

The state's minimum wage is also rising again (for all companies, regardless of size) to \$16.90 per hour for non-exempt employees and \$70,304 for salaried workers.

### OTHER LAWS GOING INTO EFFECT

**Workplace Know Your Rights Act:** Employers must provide each employee with a stand-alone, written notice summarizing employees key rights, including: 1) the right to workers' compensation benefits, 2) the right to be notified of immigration-agency inspections, 3) protections against "unfair immigration-related practices," 4) the right to organize a union or engage in concerted activity, 5) constitutional rights when inter-

acting with law enforcement at the workplace, 6) information on new legal developments deemed material by the Labor Commissioner, and 7) a list of relevant enforcement agencies. This notice must be provided by Feb. 1, 2026, and every year thereafter. The Labor Commissioner must create and update a template notice by Jan. 1, 2026.

**Pay Equity Enforcement Act:** Clarifies employer pay-scale obligations under California's Pay Transparency Law by requiring employers with 15 or more employees to include a "good faith estimate" of the salary or wage range in every job posting, rather than the range the employer might be expected to pay "for the position" generally.

**Wage payments:** SB 261 authorizes civil penalties of up to three times the unpaid amount for judgments arising from nonpayment of wages left unsatisfied after 180 days. The bill requires a court to award a prevailing plaintiff all reasonable attorney's fees and costs in any action brought by a judgment creditor, the commissioner

or a public prosecutor to enforce a final judgment arising from the non-payment of wages, penalties or other amounts owed.

**Additional WARN Act notice requirement:** The California Worker Adjustment and Retraining Act, which prohibits mass layoffs, relocations or terminations without written notice to employees, will soon require that the notice also include whether the employer plans to coordinate services through the local workforce development board, and to provide information about CalFresh (the state's food assistance program).

**Wage theft and withheld tip penalties:** This law grants the Labor Commissioner the authority to issue citations and assess penalties against employers that illegally take or withhold employee tips, as prohibited under existing California law.

**Gig worker right to organize:** Establishes the Transportation Network Company Drivers Labor Relations Act, granting drivers the right

to organize, bargain collectively and engage in concerted activities (i.e., unionize) for mutual aid or protection irrespective of their status as independent contractors.

**Construction trucking for employees and independent contractors:** Clarifies that owning a vehicle does not make a driver an independent contractor. Creates the Construction Trucking Employer Amnesty Program to allow contractors to avoid penalties for past driver misclassification if they reclassify workers as employees. Establishes a "two-check" system for construction drivers who own their own trucks: one for wages and one for vehicle reimbursement. SB 809 Durazo (D-Los Angeles)

**Cannabis excise tax starting 2026:** New legislation expands the definitions of "cannabis" and "cannabis products" for excise-tax purposes. The reform impacts both cannabis retailers and ancillary supply-chain vendors operating in California, potentially influencing cost structures and market dynamics. ■



# Downtown Long Beach Vons to remove self-checkout lanes, workers say



Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

The self-checkout area at the downtown Long Beach Von's on Monday, Nov. 17, 2025

By John Donegan

The Vons store in Downtown Long Beach abruptly covered its self-checkout lanes in plastic wrap and told employees it plans to remove them completely after the passage of a city ordinance that requires more staff to monitor these lanes.

The ordinance, approved earlier this fall, went into effect in September.

Three of the four Vons locations — near the Traffic Circle, downtown and on Spring Street in East Long Beach — shut down their self-checkout stations that month. Their location in Belmont Shore has kept its lanes open.

Workers said staffing levels have declined dramatically in the past year.

The city law allowed businesses — roughly 19 affected citywide — 30 days to implement the new rules, which critics of the law previously warned was not enough time. But those with the grocers union say the matter cannot wait, citing anecdotes of violence and fear from workers who feel overwhelmed and unsafe in their shifts.

The state grocers association and local business groups previously said they expected self-checkout lanes to reopen after stores figured out how to implement the new rules. It's unclear if that's now changed. ■

## Shutdown ends in time for holiday travel

By staff and wire reports

The federal government lifted restrictions on commercial flights following the end of the longest government shutdown in U.S. history — just in time for what experts say will be the busiest holiday travel season since 2019.

Roughly 6.78 million Southern California residents were expected to travel for Thanksgiving alone (Nov. 25 to Dec. 1), which is 7% higher than 2019 and nearly 3% above last year, according to the Auto Club of Southern California.

The majority of people are expected to travel by car, while more than 700,000 plan flights and another 200,000 travel by train, bus, ship or other means.

Long Beach Airport is expecting to see 110,000 passengers from Nov. 21-30. The Sunday after Thanksgiving, Nov. 30, is expected to be the busiest day, while the Wednesday and Friday before and after Thanksgiving are expected to draw 12,000 passengers per day — 20% more than a typical day, officials said.



Photo by Brandon Richardson/Long Beach Business Journal

A Southwest flight comes in for a landing at Long Beach Airport.

The Auto Club noted that Southern California drivers will be paying some of the highest gas prices of the year, with a gallon of gas averaging about \$4.66.

Top travel destinations include San Diego,

Las Vegas, Disneyland and the Bay Area.

Nationwide, an estimated 81 million people are expected to travel this year — 1.6 million more than 2024.

Air travel is expected to rise modestly, with more than 6 million people flying to various destinations over Thanksgiving.

Airline and airport officials were bracing for a far worse scenario earlier in November as the government shutdown dragged on for 43 days, the longest in U.S. history. In early November, the FAA ordered airlines to cut 10% of commercial flights due to the loss of air traffic controllers.

Cancellations hit their highest point on Nov. 9, when airlines canceled nearly 3,000 flights, primarily at large airports like Los Angeles International.

American Airlines CEO Robert Isom told CNBC during the shutdown that the loss of government funding had already hit holiday bookings. "Nobody wants to put up with hassle," he said.

Long Beach Airport Director Cynthia Guidry, meanwhile, urged travelers to arrive early for flights.

"We know that holiday travel can be stressful, so our team works hard to keep the Long Beach experience relaxed and efficient," she said in a statement. ■



## Stay ahead of the pack

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Budget from page 1

the city of Long Beach and the Long Beach Reform Coalition — means the loss of roughly \$60 million over the next two years.

In a statement after the ruling, the city said it pursued a court order that would've let them implement the tax increase earlier than originally planned "to best represent the interests of the majority of voters who approved Measure A and supported increased investment in public safety and infrastructure."

Now, however, further investments in infrastructure and public safety will be delayed until 2027, the statement said — though it remains unclear whether any current programs or positions are in jeopardy.

The intent of voters

Shoppers in Long Beach for years paid a cumulative tax rate of 10.25%, formerly the state's cap. Part of that money went to Los Angeles County under a temporary countywide sales tax called Measure H that charged 0.25% to fund homeless services.

In 2020, on the confidence that taxes were still needed to improve local infrastructure and bolster public safety, voters extended the local Measure A tax, with a stipulation that upon the ending of Measure H in October 2027, the city would raise the local sales tax up a quarter-cent, making it a 1% sales tax and ensuring Long Beach's tax rate stayed at the highest possible level.

Then — unexpectedly — that timeline was upended.

Voters last November ended Measure H years early, replacing it with a higher, 0.5% county sales tax.

At the same time, state legislators took an unusual step of exempting this new measure from California's tax cap, meaning it wouldn't be included toward the cumulative 10.25% max.

City officials and attorneys quickly circled the matter, and in December, the Long Beach City Council — in lockstep with the city attorney, manager and mayor — said it was always the intention of the voters to raise Long Beach's Measure A tax as soon as possible, regardless of the date.

In a 6-0 vote, the council agreed to remove the October 2027 date from city tax code, effectively raising the rate two years earlier than originally anticipated.

By February, the local reform group sued the city, and in April — when the state began collecting new taxes — California's tax department, known as the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration, refused to levy the new rate, saying it would violate the state constitution that says voters must approve the increase.

Instead of paying 10.75% in taxes on every purchase, shoppers and diners in Long Beach continued to pay 10.50%.

Long Beach sued the state tax de-

partment on March 21, arguing their understanding embodied the will of the voters, citing voter materials in the March 2020 sample ballot books they say back up this logic.

Leading up to trial, the city argued that the rate change was tied to the sunset of the county measure — not any particular date — and said the county tax's premature ending cast a legal cloud over the matter.

"The Court does not find this reading reasonable," Superior Court Judge Stephen Acquisto said. "The City assigns too much weight to the 'sunset' language. ... The City's reading would require the Court to disregard the dates specified in the measure as to render them meaningless."

"Absent ambiguity, we presume that the voters intend the meaning apparent on the face of an initiative measure ... and the court may not add to the statute or rewrite it to conform to an assumed intent that is not apparent in its language," according to court documents.

Acquisto sided with the state's interpretation that the matter was straightforward and simple: that the tax rate cannot be charged until the date approved by voters.

The ruling puts to rest any hope city officials had to reap millions of dollars through an extra two-and-a-half years at the higher rate.

Long Beach continues to have a combined sales tax rate of 10.50%, the same as 38 other cities in California. ■

Ambulance from page 4

2024, currently acts as a relief unit in the busiest parts of the city from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., when calls are heaviest. In its first year, it handled nearly 3,000 calls, focused largely on where they're most concentrated — Downtown, Midtown, Belmont and Alamitos Beach neighborhoods. But the team was reduced to part-time — from seven days to three — after it became clear it wouldn't have enough funding to finish the year.

The Rescue 2 unit, Nguyen said, responds to an average of 249 calls a month.

The main stickler is the price. It would cost between \$1.23 million to \$2 million annually, according to the city fire chief, to restore the Rescue 2 team to a seven-day schedule.

Factoring in the cost of fuel for fire trucks, a scramble to hire — and keep — new firefighters and new budget constraints that have sown anxiety in civic leaders already battered by declines in oil revenue, doubts linger over whether that will happen anytime soon. ■

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# The 2028 Olympics schedule is out

By Libby Rainy, LAist

The competition schedule for the Olympics is out — more than two years ahead of the 2028 Games.

The extensive program lays out the dates, times and locations of all competitions for 51 sports taking place across Southern California (and as far as Oklahoma City).

The first Olympic winner will be named at the women's triathlon in Venice Beach on the morning of July 15 — the first day of the Games and the day after the opening ceremony. The last will be more than two weeks later, July 30, when the men's and women's medley relay finals and other swimming finals will take place at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood.

The closing ceremonies will take place the same day at the L.A. Memorial Coliseum in Exposition Park.

The 2028 Games have flipped the traditional Olympic schedule to start with track and field and end with swimming. LA28 executive Shana Ferguson said that's because SoFi Stadium is one of the venues hosting the Opening Ceremonies, and the site of all swimming competitions.

"In order to transition from opening ceremonies to swimming, we just couldn't do it," Ferguson said.

## Olympics schedulers considered summer weather

Ferguson called developing the competition schedule a "painstaking process" that took months of coordinating with the International Olympic Committee and 36 international sports



A rendering of the venues planned for the area around the Long Beach Convention Center and Alamitos Beach. Courtesy LA28.

federations, which manage individual sports.

The Games will come to Los Angeles in the middle of summer, and Ferguson said LA28 considered heat and sunshine when it laid out the schedule.

Diving will take place at the Rose Bowl Aquatic Center in Pasadena. Those competitions are scheduled either in the morning or afternoon, with a gap between 12:30 and 2 p.m.

Equestrian competition also has been scheduled with the summer heat in mind.

Those competitions will take place at the Santa Anita racetrack in Arcadia, either in the morning

or late afternoon. Ferguson said that's for the horses — and also the fans.

## Schedule highlights

July 29 will be the busiest day of Olympic competition, with 26 finals in marathon, boxing, swimming, table tennis and many more.

The first day of competition will have the most women's finals, including the triathlon and 100-meter and women's rugby sevens.

The Paralympic schedule hasn't been released yet. Fans will be able to register for tickets starting in January. They'll cost as little as \$28. ■

# Port of Long Beach CEO Mario Cordero to retire in December

Staff report

After eight years leading the nation's second-largest seaport, Port of Long Beach CEO Mario Cordero will retire in December.

Cordero led the port through an era of rapid cargo growth, a global pandemic and major modernization. His retirement at the end of the year caps a varied career with seven years on the Federal Maritime Commission in Washington, D.C., and eight years as a member of the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners.

"I could not be more grateful for what has been the opportunity of a lifetime to lead the Port of Long Beach over these past several years," Cordero said in a statement. "While I'll miss being in the center of action for international trade, I know that I'm leaving the port in the very capable hands of our Board of Harbor Commissioners and the exemplary staff."

The board is expected to determine a process for replacing Cordero in the coming months.



Port of Long Beach CEO Mario Cordero addressed the media during a press conference in September 2025. Photo by Thomas R. Cordova/Long Beach Business Journal

"It's been an honor to work with Mario," Long Beach Harbor Commission President Frank Colonna said in a statement. "He will be missed at the port, but I'm very happy for him to soon begin enjoying

his well-deserved retirement."

Cordero, the Los Angeles-born son of Mexican immigrants, was the first in his family to attend college. His father had urged him to pursue engineering as a career, but Cordero

studied law. Influenced by activism in the early 1970s, he wanted to become a lawyer to make a difference in society.

He earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Cal State Long Beach and later a law degree at Santa Clara University.

Cordero practiced law for more than 30 years and also taught political science part-time at Long Beach City College.

He joined the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners in 2003, appointed by then-Mayor Beverly O'Neill and re-appointed in 2009 by then-Mayor Bob Foster.

During his tenure, Cordero proposed the Green Port Policy, a commitment by the port to environmental sustainability.

In May 2017, he was selected as CEO of the Port of Long Beach, returning to the city after working as an appointee of former President Barack Obama to the Federal Maritime Commission, the body that oversees the nation's maritime policy.

"I've known Mario Cordero for a long time, and I have the deepest respect for his leadership and legacy," Long Beach Mayor Rex Richardson said in a statement. "Mario has always stepped up to serve, whether as chair of the Federal Maritime Commission, as a leader on the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners, or as CEO of our port." ■



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# Continued Success Ahead

The Port of Long Beach is moving cargo ahead of last-year's record pace, despite global uncertainty. We're looking forward to a prosperous 2026 as we expand rail infrastructure and continue to offer world-class customer service.



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