

Inside This Issue



Health Care Quarterly Creating Healthier Office Environments

Page 28



A Conversation With City College Acting President Ann-Marie Gabel

Page 34



Pacific Coast University, School Of Law Celebrates 90th Year

Page 37



Small Business Showcase This Issue: Wardlow Road

Pages 38-39

- 2 People In The News
- 6 Realty Views
- 18 Newswatch
- 32 HealthWise
- 34 Educators Discuss Betsy DeVoss
- 38 Small Business Dollars & Sense

Medical Pioneer Dr. Rodney White Continues To Innovate As New Vascular Surgery Director At Long Beach Memorial

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor

Dr. Rodney White, whose co-development of the aortic endovascular stent revolutionized vascular surgery, is continuing to advance innovations in the field in his new role as medical director of vascular surgery at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center.

With colleague Dr. Thomas Fogarty, White led testing and human deployment of the aortic stent graft in 1996. The invention repairs aneurysms of the aorta, the body's main blood vessel, by inserting a stent wrapped in a fabric liner through a catheter into the blood vessel. Upon release, the stent expands and reinforces weaknesses in the aorta. This minimally invasive alternative to open-

(Please Continue To Page 22)



Dr. Rodney White, the new medical director of vascular surgery for Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, holds up an invention that, since he helped create it, changed the field of vascular surgery: an endovascular aortic stent. Pictured in the hospital's hybrid imaging suite, from left, are: Dr. Ankur Gupta, vascular surgeon; Derek Lester, director of invasive cardiology; and Dr. White. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

PART II

After Two Years Of Protests, Still No Vote To Unionize Downtown Hotels

Union, Hotels At Odds Over Process; Workers And Councilmember Weigh In

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor

For about the past two years, Unite Here Local 11 – a union based in Southern California – has been organizing protests at the Westin Long Beach and Renaissance Long Beach hotels in an effort to promote unionization

and to support workers who say their rights have been violated. Nearby residents say these consistent protests have been marked most noticeably by early morning bullhorn noise, as well as one incident in which protestors carried a large wooden cross through the Westin's lobby.

But despite two years of

protesting, a vote amongst workers to decide whether to join Unite Here Local 11 has yet to occur.

In order to hold a formal vote overseen by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), a petition in support of unionization must be signed by at least 30% of employees and filed with the board.

(Please Continue To Page 16)

Pushback On Pool Project Price Tag

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Writer

Since the Belmont Plaza Olympic Pool was deemed seismically unsafe and closed in 2013, the replacement project has been a hot-button issue for some residents of the area. Now, at its March 2 meeting, the Long Beach Planning Commission is expected to certify the environmental impact report (EIR) and approve the site plan review, conditional use permit, standards variance and local coastal development permit.

Jeff Miller, a resident of Belmont Shore, and Gordana Kajer, a resident of Belmont Heights, are among those who have voiced concerns about the project, ranging

(Please Continue To Page 12)

Land Use And Heights

Proposed Building
Heights Questioned
Amid Housing Shortage

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Writer

At its February 2 meeting, the Long Beach Planning Commission voted 5-1 to continue the discussion on the proposed Land Use Element and Urban Design Element to the General Plan. After more than an hour and a half of discussion and another hour of public comment, commissioners asked city staff to reconsider building heights and density in certain areas and requested more community outreach.

(Please Continue To Page 9)

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MILLENNIAL PULSE Work Life Balanc... ing Act

By Assistant Editor Samantha Mehlinger

In a very hip creative office space (can't get any more hip than exposed brick walls and an open-air staircase) across from the very hip Berlin Bistro/Fingerprints Record Store building, two Millennials (I'd call them hip too but there wasn't enough time to administer the test, which involves familiarity with local

speakeasies and knowledge of which cheap, forgotten brand of beer is currently in right now) run their own marketing agency called Commune Communications.


And with their success, they're kind of living the Millennial Dream.

The guys in question — (Please Continue To Page 4)



New Long Beach Hotel Managers

During the past several months, Long Beach has welcomed three new hotel managers to the city. Pictured from left are: Mooyon Kim, Holiday Inn Long Beach Airport; Kenya Bannister, Courtyard by Marriott Long Beach Airport; and Paolo Domingo at the Queen Mary. Kim, who has 20 years of industry experience, including 15 years as a general manager, was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea. He studied management and marketing at the University of Kentucky, and hotel and restaurant management at the Collins College of Hospitality Management at Cal Poly Pomona. Bannister, who was born and raised in Long Beach, attended Long Beach City College and lives in the city, helped with the opening of the Courtyard four years ago, serving as director of sales. She has now returned as general manager. She began her 20-plus year industry career as an intern at the Queen Mary. Domingo came to Long Beach from Las Vegas, where he served as director of hotel operations at the Red Rock Casino Resort and Spa, and prior to that in a similar role at the MGM Grand Casino. He began his career with the Hyatt Regency in San Francisco, saying he followed in his father's footsteps, who served 40 years in the industry. At the Queen Mary, he oversees the day-to-day operations of the entire ship. He earned a bachelor's in history from UC Santa Barbara. (Photographs by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

 **Sean Gamette** has been promoted to managing director of engineering services for the **Port of Long Beach**. He replaces **Doug Thiessen**, who retired earlier this year. According to the port's website, Gamette oversees the port's design, construction management and program management divisions, heading all port engineering and construction projects and overseeing an annual project budget of more than \$200 million. He joined the port in 2003 as a senior program manager and was promoted to deputy chief harbor engineer in 2009 and chief harbor engineer in 2013. He earned a bachelor's of science in engineering from Cal Poly State University. . . . **Debra Montalvo Russell** has been promoted to vice president of community relations and real estate operations for **Signal Hill Petroleum**, a privately owned energy company that focuses on the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas in urban areas. Russell wears several hats for the company, including overseeing government affairs, urban seismic ventures, real estate operations and leading the community relations team. The



Russell

latter includes the firm's giving efforts and events that improve the quality of life in the Signal Hill area. She earned her bachelor's in international business from Cal State Fresno. . . . Long Beach-based **Alta Environmental** has hired two new senior consultants and project managers. **Matthew Renaud** joins the firm's water resources group and **Lynleigh Love** is part of the site assessment and remediation team. Renaud has 15 years of experience in the private and public consulting field, overseeing construction general permit compliance programs and writing storm water pollution prevention plans. Love has more than 20 years of experience preparing, reviewing and stamping technical documents including risk-based corrective action, site conceptual models, pilot test reports, remedial action plans and much more. Renaud earned a bachelor's in environmental studies from State University of New York, and Love holds a bachelor's in geology from Cal State Fullerton. . . . Two new members have joined the **SCAN Group Board of Directors**: **Christobel E. Selecky** and **Dr. Linda Rosen-**



Renaud



Love

stock. Based in Long Beach since it was founded in 1977, SCAN is a "senior-focused organization dedicated to keeping seniors healthy and independent." It provides SCAN Health Plan, one of the largest not-for-profit Medicare Advantage plans in the nation. Selecky has more than 30 years of experience in the health care industry and owns Population Health Strategies consultancy firm. Rosenstock is a former dean of the UCLA Fielding School of public health and current professor at the university. . . . **Mayor Robert Garcia** announced the appointment of nine residents to city commissions and five members to a port advisory committee. New commissioners are: **Matthew Peterson**, a managing partner of Shore Restaurant Group to the Belmont Shore Parking and Business Improvement Area Advisory Commission; **Miles Nevin**, director of the president's office at Long Beach City College, to the Transactions and Use Tax Citizen's Advisory Committee; **Zoe Nicholson**, a writer, researcher and published author, and **Gio Ferraro**, owner of Groundwork Fitness, to the Human Relations Commission; **Ethel Powers**, involved in general

education programs in the community, to Board of Examiners, Appeals and Condemnation; **Jessica Marquez**, a visually impaired teacher of communication studies at CSU Long Beach, to the Citizens' Advisory Commission on Disabilities; **Michael Clemson**, energy program manager for the CSU Office of the Chancellor, to the Long Beach Transportation Company Board of Directors; **Jo Prabhu**, a transportation advocate for seniors, to the Senior Citizen Advisory Commission; and **Gustavo Orozco**, a CSU Long Beach student and army vet, to the Veterans Affairs Commission. Appointed to the Port of Long Beach Community Grants Advisory Committee, which provides direction in awarding more than \$45 million of port mitigation grants, are: **Gary DeLong**, former councilmember and owner of TMSI; **Irma Archuleta**, former city college trustee and a retired teacher and administrator; **Joanne Davis**, a developer of financial management programs for statewide campaigns; **Sabrina Sanders**, a supporter of student academic programs at CSU Chancellor's Office; and **Kathleen Irvine**, a landscape designer, consultant and teacher.

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Why a business plan is a must for your company



As a business owner, you're focused on the day-to-day. It's challenging and rewarding. You have a vision for your business, where you want to go next, but the daily demands can make it hard to turn your vision into a formal business plan.

But having that business plan is critical. It's your roadmap. It helps you balance short- and long-term goals, assess customer needs, and size up your competition. It's a real-time document that charts where you're going and how you're going to get there. It's a foundation for future success.

Creating a business plan can be simple with the right tools and guidance, and it can pay off in a big way. Consider these five reasons why you should create a business plan.

1. A business plan can serve as a guide through your company's life cycle, from startup to growth to succession planning. Gaining competitive intelligence and customer insights is critical for your plan. You just might discover a new target market that's willing to pay a premium price for your product or service. With that information, you might re-target your marketing efforts, improve customer loyalty, or maximize sales.

2. A business plan can help you determine how to spend your time and money most effectively. It can help you estimate what you'll need to spend to reach your goals, whether that means adding an IT expert or retaining an accountant.

3. A business plan may help you as you seek funding for your business. Some lenders require a formal plan before extending a loan or line of credit. Investors also want to see how you map out your strategy and goals.

4. A business plan outlines current and future obstacles you might face. Your plan will include a description of your products or services, your plans for generating revenue, your target customers, trends in your industry, what your competitors are doing, and what resources you might need. This information can help you anticipate and avoid potential risks in these areas instead of reacting to them.

5. By turning your ideas into a formal plan, you can navigate internal challenges.

By clearly defining roles and a strategy everyone agrees on, you can prevent conflicts between owners, employees, and other key stakeholders.



As your business grows and changes, adjust your plan accordingly. Revisit it annual, biannually, or quarterly. This makes your business plan a living document that can help keep you on track to achieve your goals, whatever they might be.

Start building your business plan today by accessing the tools and learning resources in the Business Plan Center at [WellsFargoWorks.com/plan](https://wellsfargoworks.com/plan).

Together we'll go far



Millennial Pulse

(Continued From Page 1)

James Whale, 37, native New Zealander, and Ryan La Rosa, 34 year old Long Beach local – left careers at big agencies in New York City to strike out on their own in a way that emulates the most sought after ideal of Millennials: work-life balance.

My last article cited research that showed most Millennials feel indifferent towards their jobs but desire to be passionate and have value in the workplace. They also crave flexibility and opportunities to advance.

I also promised to follow up with local employers on whether or not Millennials fit into the stereotype that they are lazy and entitled at work, or if we're all just misunderstood.

La Rosa and Whale set the stage for this discussion so well it's almost like I invented

them. (But I swear, I didn't. Google them.)

As they tell it, at the mega-ad agencies of New York, work-life balance was basically nonexistent. "From the outside in, some of these bigger agencies look pretty sexy and amazing," Whale said. "And you get to work on these big accounts like Adidas and Coca Cola. But the truth of it is there are so many people willing to do your job that nights, weekends are fair game," he recounted.

"The way that advertising agencies have gone is that you populate them with floors and floors of young people who are willing to do that, because that's how you pay your dues," La Rosa said. "We just wanted to not do that at all costs."

For these two, work-life balance not only allows for leisure – it is also a means

producing better work. "Frankly, you can't solve creative problems sitting in front of your computer 12 hours a day," La Rosa said. "The times that we have solved those problems hiking in Yosemite or Joshua Tree . . . far outnumber the times we have solved those problems sitting and staring at each other in an office."

At Commune, working remotely is totally acceptable, and taking time off is encouraged. Even simple breaks to go out for coffee help keep creativity flowing, La Rosa said.

Lest I anger the masses by only interviewing Millennials, I also talked to Long Beach's own Fortune 500 company, Molina Healthcare. Millennials make up 42% of its massive 20,000-person workforce, according to Edward Topps, manager of human resources and talent acquisition at the firm.

Talking to Topps, it seems the research presented in my last column is pretty in line with Molina's understanding of Millennials.

To refresh the memories of my legions of adoring fans (read: Grandma), a poll by Deloitte found that more than half of Millennials feel their leadership skills are not being developed, an issue cited by nearly three-quarters who plan to leave their jobs in a couple of years.

Topps said Molina's highest turnover rate is among Millennials, who tend to want to seek other opportunities to broaden their horizons.

"They want to feel like their work is a part of their company's mission and purpose – that it actually provides value," Topps said of Millennials. He added, "They want to make sure they are having that direct impact."

To that end, Molina Healthcare provides

guidance on career advancement and is increasingly pushing mentorship opportunities.

A topic of conversation within Molina's HR department is how to increase flexible work opportunities. "We have been looking at 9/80 [work schedule] approaches, maybe one to two days working remote," Topps said.

Topps dismissed the stereotype that Millennials are lazy. If Millennials on his team have enough free time to be on their phones, he said, "I'm probably not challenging them enough."

But both Commune Communications and Molina Healthcare pointed out a trend of Millennials expecting to be assigned work above their experience level.

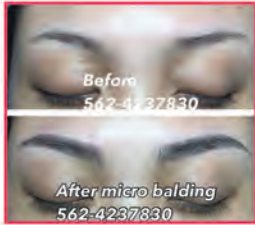
"You find with a lot of Millennials, because they are so ambitious [when] they are coming right out of college . . . they want to jump right in to a manager or director role with no years of experience," Topps said. "But we want to make sure we still motivate them and train them the appropriate way to let them have realistic expectations."

La Rosa and Whale tend to hire recent college graduates and have seen similar behavior. "Sometimes we have to pump the brakes and go, 'Well, you're actually not ready to create a whole advertising campaign,'" La Rosa said.

So what's my verdict on Millennials in the workplace? As both Topps and the Commune guys noted – laziness and entitlement are qualities that could apply to any age group. Sure, maybe we're a little full of ourselves, but that wind will get knocked out of our sails pretty fast.

Cut us some slack and let us take a coffee break, for God's sake. ■

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Developers and city officials broke ground on the 26-acre Long Beach Exchange on February 14. The largest project to date on the Douglas Park property will consist of 266,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space on the southwest corner of Lakewood Boulevard and Carson Street. Pictured from left: Jonathan San Antonio of Rockwood Capital; Stephen Thorp of Burnham USA; Scott Burnham of Burnham USA; Mayor Robert Garcia; 5th District Councilmember Stacy Mungo; Bryon Ward of Burnham-Ward Properties; Therese Hotvedt of Burnham USA; and Joel Mayer of Rockwood Capital. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson, Rendering courtesy of Burnham USA)

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
 Senior Writer

Development News

Long Beach Exchange Groundbreaking

On February 14, Long Beach city officials and developers celebrated the groundbreaking of Douglas Park's largest project to date, the 26-acre Long Beach Exchange (LBX) on the southeast corner of Lakewood Boulevard and Carson Street.

The project by Burnham-Ward Properties, an affiliate of Burnham USA, was approved last November and will consist of approximately 266,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space. Whole Foods 365,



Nordstrom Rack, Orchard Supply Hardware, PetSmart and T.J. Maxx are confirmed tenants of the complex.

"The vision is to develop an experiential retail shopping center that focuses on dining, fashion and entertainment," Stephen Thorp, executive vice president of Burnham USA, said. "We're very excited to be a part of the community, and we look forward to our grand opening in April 2018."

Scott Burnham, CEO of Burnham USA, said the design and aesthetic of the project is meant to pay homage to the history of aviation in the area, as the site is the former location of McDonnell Douglas operations. Two acres of the project are designed as open communal space, according to Burnham.

This space will be anchored by a repurposed airplane hangar, which will house numerous smaller purveyors such as artisanal coffee, juice and small-scale retailers.

To further the spirit of aviation at the site, Bryon Ward, partner at Burnham-Ward, said the company spent time at the Long Beach Historical Society and found photographs and statues that depict the aviation history of Long Beach.

"A lot of found art and a lot of imagery are going to be curated and consolidated on this site," Ward said. "So in addition to a great retail experience, it will hopefully be a museum of sorts and hopefully a reminder of what this site meant to the city, to the state and to the country."

Mayor Robert Garcia said LBX is a quality project and that he is glad to see a project that respects the area's history while continuing Long Beach's "incredible leaps and bounds" in bringing retail and restaurants to residents citywide. He said he expects the project to not only draw Long Beach residents from all parts of the city but also across the region.

"We rarely get a project where everyone's happy. There's a lot of projects where we get a lot of opposition or a lot of concern," Garcia said. "This has not been one of those projects. This has been like a rolling out the red carpet type of a situation with this community."

Fifth District Councilmember Stacy Mungo said there is a positive buzz throughout her district about the project. She said the area has long since been a "food desert," with residents leaving the city to dine. However, recent developments and LBX look to change that routine.

"As you finish your construction and you start to open your doors, we look forward to partnering with you to hire Long Beach residents to keep the commutes low and employees happy," Mungo added.

New Industrial And Office Condo Project

Construction is set to begin in March on a 50,000-square-foot industrial and office condo project at 1333-1351 Orizaba Ave., pictured below. The project by Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estates Services will feature 10 suites ranging from 2,470 square feet to 7,182 square feet. The condos are near restaurants such as Joe Jost's, Working Class Kitchen and Long Beach Thai and are walking distance to Orizaba Park. Suites will sell for between \$199 and \$250 per square foot.



Realty Views

Will Regulatory Relief Help Housing?



By **TERRY ROSS**

A lot of attention has been focused on easing regulatory hurdles by the new administration in Washington, and it appears that the home building industry is looking in that direction for some help in alleviating one of the largest problems in housing right now: not enough new homes.

It has been well-documented that current owners are not moving like they were in the early part of this century – well before the housing crash – and that fact has impacted inventory on all levels. The number of homes for sale is not meeting the demand for buyers, which is creating a shortage and even driving a resurgence in prices.

If owners feel more secure in staying

put and not selling, then the answer to the current shortage needs to come from homebuilders – and recent activity is not very encouraging there.

According to the recently released National Association of Home Builders/First American Title Leading Markets Index (LMI), single-family permits are running at just 52% of normal activity, while employment is at 98% and home prices were well above normal at 147% at the end of 2016. This kind of activity will lead to an affordability issue, which is already happening in some markets.

"While housing continues to gradually mend, regulatory constraints are preventing builders from meeting demand in many markets," said NAHB Chairman Granger MacDonald, a homebuilder and developer from Kerrville, Texas. "We expect further improvement in the year ahead as we work with the new Trump administration and Congress to implement regulatory relief that [will] help small businesses and the housing sector."

The other component of this issue involves the supply of labor and available lots on which to build. Regulatory reform can impact these areas as well if the government can strip away some of the red tape that in-

creases cost, delays and entitlements to build. Even though many of these entanglements are likely to take months or years to change, housing leaders feel that more housing production could be on the way.

"Though rising, single-family permits continue to lag the other components of the LMI," said NAHB Chief Economist Robert Dietz. "This is due to a number of factors, including regulatory hurdles and supply-side headwinds such as persistent shortages of lots and labor in many markets. As we address these challenges, we should see an additional increase in housing production."

From the outside, the LMI Index looks to have improved overall and shows that 174 of approximately 340 metro areas across the country have returned to or exceeded their last normal levels of economic and housing activity – with 86 markets improved over 2015.

"More than 250 markets, or 75% of all metro areas nationwide, now stand at or above 90% on this quarter's Leading Market Index," added Kurt Pfothenauer, vice chairman of First American Title Insurance Company, which co-sponsors the LMI report. "This shows that the overall housing market

continues to improve at a moderate pace."

A number of factors are used in this study of U.S. metros areas—including price, permit and employment levels for the past 12 months and dividing each by their annual average over the last period of normal growth. They use the 2000-2003 period for home prices and permits as the last normal period and 2007 for the employment baseline numbers.

Among major metro areas showing improvement, Baton Rouge tops the list, followed by Austin; Honolulu; Provo, Utah; and San Jose. Los Angeles ranked ninth. Among the smaller metro areas, Odessa, Texas, ranked first, followed by Midland, Texas; Ithaca, New York; Walla Walla Washington; and Florence, Alabama.

Untangling the regulatory maze will not automatically supply more labor or produce more places to build; however, making it easier to work toward those goals, instead of creating roadblocks, should help these issues.

(Terry Ross, the broker-owner of TR Properties, will answer any questions about today's real estate market. E-mail questions to Realty Views at terryross1@cs.com or call 949/457-4922.) ■



Pictured is the new headquarters office at 4000 Cover St. at Douglas Park for C2O Coconut Water, LLC. The firm relocated from Seal Beach and purchased the freestanding commercial building of approximately 8,855 rentable square feet for \$3.25 million. Mark Sokolowski of Newmark Grubb Knight Frank represented the company. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

Real Estate News

Rancho Dominguez Building Sale

Orient Express LLC recently acquired an industrial building located at 3144 E. Maria St. in Rancho Dominguez, adjacent to Northwest Long Beach. The 34,964-square-foot building was sold for more than \$4.8 million and includes approximately 5,000 square feet of office space. DAUM Commercial Real Estate Services represented the seller, Michael Leung, while Colliers International represented Orient Express.

Retail And Professional Services News

Olympix Fitness Now Open

Taking the place of Yankee Doodles, Olympix Fitness opened its doors for member workouts on February 18, with regular operating hours that began on February 20. The Belmont Shore gym is located at 4101

Olympic Plaza and is open from 5 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on weekdays and 5 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. on weekends. The facility includes state-of-the-art equipment, trainers and instructors in three classrooms, ocean views throughout much of the facility and members can utilize the rooftop deck for sunrise and sunset yoga and meditation, among other things. The space also includes an in-house cafe called Portfolio Fit by Kerstin Kansteiner, owner of Portfolio and Berlin coffeehouses on 4th Street. The cafe is open to members and nonmembers alike and

offers coffee, smoothies, protein shakes, high-protein snacks and healthy meals.

Motorcycle Repair Shop Opens On Wardlow Road

Long Beach Choppers LLC celebrated its grand opening on Saturday, February 25. According to a press release, the shop is "dedicated to keeping old school Harley Davidson and custom choppers on the road." The shop is located at 708 E. Wardlow Rd., just behind Sports Pub.

Furniture And Home Decor On 2nd Street In Belmont Shore

H. Richtter, a new home decor and furniture store, is scheduled to open for business March 1 at 5470 E. 2nd St. Owner Nick Pirniakan said the store specializes in midcentury rugs and will offer a unique shopping experience with many one-of-a-kind items and free in-house consultations. Pirniakan said a grand opening event will be scheduled at a later time. ■

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Land Use And Heights

(Continued From Page 1)

“I think it’s a major planning document for the city that’s going to affect the city for so long,” Commissioner Richard Lewis said. “I think we just want to make sure that we have it right and [are] putting the time into it.”

Lewis said he thinks city staff did a good job of spreading growth opportunities throughout the city but that the reality is that there is more developable land in areas closer to downtown near the Blueline. Because of this, proposed density is greater, and that is what is causing the concerns of the area’s residents.

Many of the questions and concerns raised by residents, which were the basis of the commission’s decision, were focused on proposed building heights, specifically in the Wrigley area in several locations along Pacific Avenue. The proposed land use would allow buildings up to five stories to be built near transit stations, while current zoning and land use does not allow for buildings of more than two stories.

“I think a lot of people were surprised by what the new building heights were going to be and what the new development was going to entail,” Lee Fukui, a 6th District resident who supports the commission’s decision, said. “We know that [city staff] want to motivate people to use the Blueline. But at the same time, we don’t think they were considering other transit lines like bus lines, and it felt like it was being concentrated here.”

Fukui and fellow 6th District resident Mauna Eichner said that while there are changes and additions to land use and density throughout the city to varying degrees, much of it seems to be focused in the Wrigley area near the Blueline. The residents said that having buildings taller than two stories in neighborhoods with single-story, single-family homes and in areas already impacted by density with regards to parking is illogical.

“We’re not opposed to development, but it ought to be smarter,” Fukui said. “There are already neighborhoods that are terribly impacted with parking, and if you add on more stories and multi-use buildings, that means more people need parking.”

“There’s this idealistic view that no one’s ever going to have cars again, but that’s never really shown to pan out in California,” Eichner added. “People feel very unsafe on the Blueline. And until that gets turned around and people really do want to get rid of their cars, to idealize that this will



Mauna Eichner and Lee Fukui are 6th District residents who live near sites that would be allowed five-story buildings under the current Long Beach Land Use Element proposal. The residents claim that such tall buildings near single-story residential homes are imposing on occupants and point to this location on West 33rd Street near Pacific Avenue as an example. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

happen is just not realistic, specifically in our neighborhood.”

Fukui and Eichner said the proposal should work for everyone but that compromise would most likely be necessary. A previous version of the proposal of the Land Use Element had more areas along Pacific Avenue that would allow up to four-story buildings. However, after pushback from residents, city staff reduced them back to two stories.

When asked if this was the compromise needed to make the proposal acceptable, the residents said that it was not enough, and the five-story allowances that remained were not wanted. Eichner said eventually they may have to compromise with allowing three- or four-story buildings but they will continue to try and convince city staff otherwise until then.

“So if they call us NIMBYs [an acronym for the phrase “Not In My Back Yard”], well, I could say the same thing about any community that cares about overdevelopment,” Fukui said. “You’ve got to be smarter about development, and you’ve got to take into consideration your neighbors. That’s all we’re asking.”

Christopher Koontz, advanced planning officer for the city, explained that the process for the proposal has been ongoing for 10 years, with a draft of the proposal posted in May 2015. In the past six months, Koontz said community outreach has been extensive and has included a citywide open house, more than 10 community meetings, a student focus group at Cal State Long

Beach, public comments on the environmental impact report and e-mails being sent to more than 6,000 community members and leaders.

“A lot of work has gone into this plan. We were definitely disappointed not to move forward immediately, but it’s not a big delay,” Koontz said. “We will be back in April to give the commission some more information. We’ll do a study session on April 6. If everything goes well there, we can go back in another month or two for a formal vote on approval.”

When discussing resident concerns about increased density near the Blueline, Koontz pointed out that the current General Plan was adopted in 1989, two years prior to the

opening of the Blueline. Additionally, since it was adopted, the city has gained 44,000 residents, the Aquarium of the Pacific was constructed, downtown has experienced a renaissance, and bike and pedestrian infrastructure has become more prominent in the area. All of these factors play a role in the proposed increased density of downtown and its adjacent neighborhoods.

Koontz noted that 58% of the housing stock is over 50 years old, and changes are needed soon to keep up with demand and prevent further drastic price increases for renters and homebuyers.

“We know that it is a big decision and a hard decision for the commission, so I to-

(Please Continue To Page 11)

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REBID – Comm. Rehab Prog. – Anaheim & Cherry	ITB DV17-031	03/09/2017
Workforce Development Svcs/Subj. Matter Experts	RFP EP17-051	03/14/2017
Downtown Long Beach Area Parking Study	RFP DV17-040	03/17/2017
Airport Landscaping Services	RFP AP17-055	03/21/2017
Duty Gear Lockers Purchase & Installation	RFP PD17-027	03/21/2017
Placement & Operation of RMUs at Rainbow Harbor	RFP PR17-042	04/14/2017

****Some of the listed projects have scheduled mandatory pre-bid meetings which may have already occurred due to publication lead times****

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Land Use And Heights

(Continued From Page 9)

tally understand them wanting more information and more time,” Koontz said. “But I think we’re going to still try to continue in an expedited fashion because we feel that it’s a plan that needs to be adopted. And the city needs to move forward if we’re going to be able to create jobs and housing opportunities for our residents.”

Parallel to the planning commission’s discussion is the city council’s recent study session on housing affordability at its February 21 meeting. During a presentation, Amy Bodek, director of Long Beach Development Services, said that 38% of Long Beach residents are above moderate income, 17% are at moderate income and the remaining 45% are at low, very low or extremely low income levels. She said these numbers indicate there are great housing needs not only for low-income residents but also those above moderate income.

Bodek also spoke to low-paying jobs and poverty, noting that 47% of households are burdened; meaning more than 30% of income is spent on rent alone. Additionally, 24% of residents are considered overburdened, meaning they spend over 50% of their income on rent. These numbers, combined with the fact that around 60% of Long Beach residents are renters, indicate a need for the construction of housing at the market rate and affordable levels with increased density, not unlike the proposed Land Use Element.

Former Assemblymember and Long Beach Councilwoman Bonnie Lowenthal is the chair of the housing study group organized by Mayor Robert Garcia last year. The group was part of three community meetings with residents, housing advocates and developers. During the council meeting, she identified three steps to help during the housing crunch: prioritize and plan affordable housing; protect and preserve current affordable housing; and produce and promote new housing.

“It’s an extremely difficult time to find funding,” Lowenthal said. “That, indeed, is your biggest challenge. We hope that you’re going to dig deep into every possible source of funding.”

Not all community members share the same reservations about increased density in areas such as Pacific Avenue. Sam Portillo, a 6th District resident, said the area is long overdue for a change.

“The Wrigley area was built and designed a long time ago. At that time, what was there was conducive to what the environment was in the neighborhood. But now times are different, and needs are different,” Portillo said. “So the buildings that are there and the regulations that we have for those areas really need to be changed so they catch up with the times.”

Portillo said he is not upset with the decision to continue the discussion because he understands the concerns of some residents regarding building height limits. However, he said that as a resident with a home directly behind Pacific Avenue, he does not take issue with taller buildings being allowed in the area.

He noted that even if five-story buildings are allowed, individual developments are still subject to approval and pushback from the community and may result in smaller buildings. Portillo also acknowledged that more story allowances make opportunities



Jay Davis owns five properties along Pacific Avenue and fully supported the Land Use Element’s proposed five-story building allowances near transit stations. Davis said a two-story cap is not enticing to developers and keeps properties vacant and underutilized. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Larry Duncan)

more viable for developers. Property owners agree that larger-scale projects are the best way to encourage more development.

“Now we’re getting to a point that we can do something that allows the opportunity for an investment that you can get a return on and not have it sit there and languish,”

Jay Davis, owner of five properties along Pacific Avenue, said. “The problem is you really can’t make the investment in the current restrictions.”

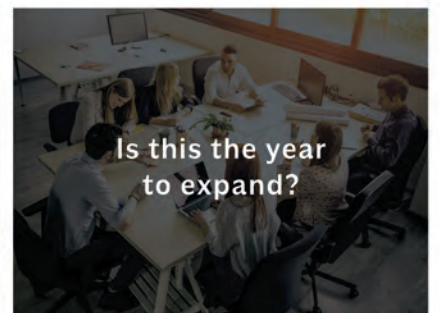
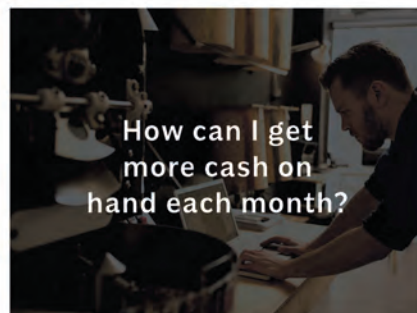
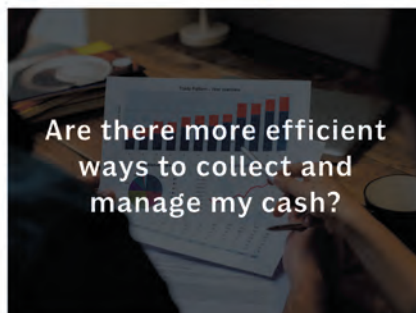
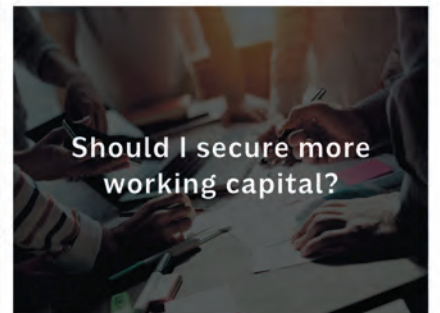
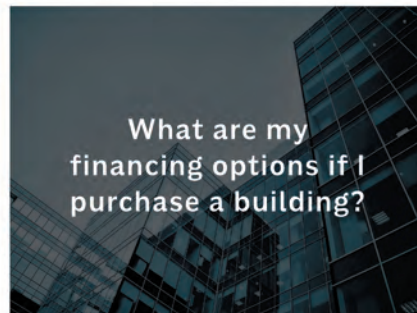
Davis said a balance needs to be found that preserves the community’s character and tradition while allowing it to grow. He

explained that people are focusing on what the community is today instead of what it could be in the future.

“Without being able to make changes and allow for something different, areas aren’t going to flourish,” Portillo said. “They’re just going to die.” ■



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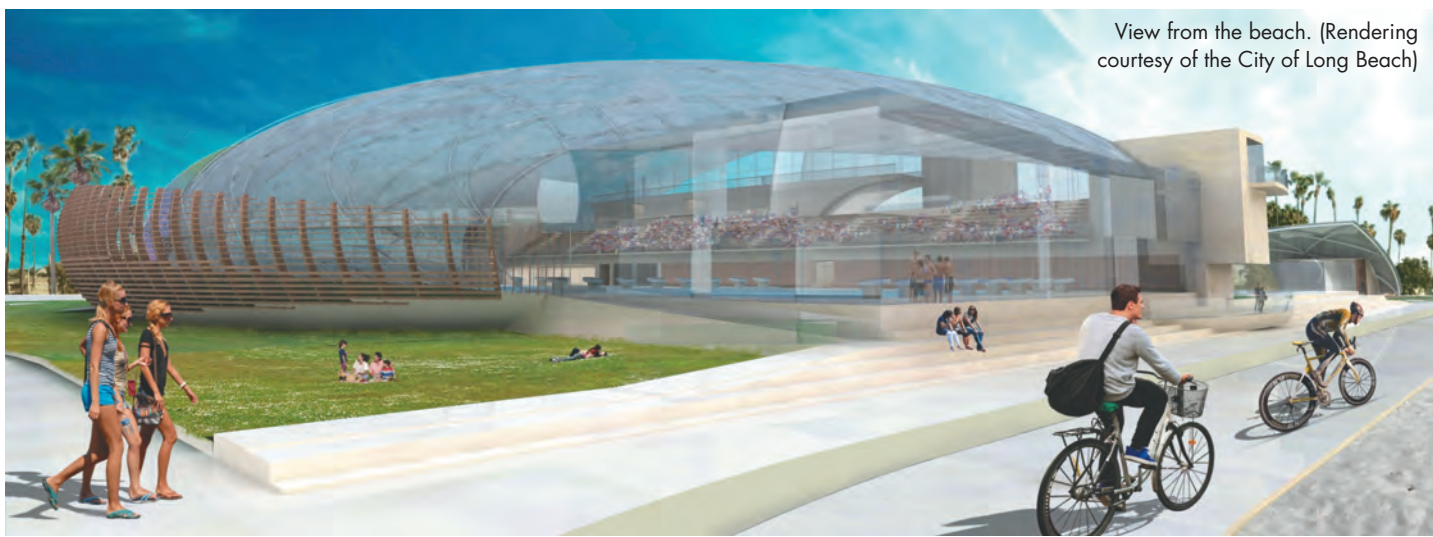
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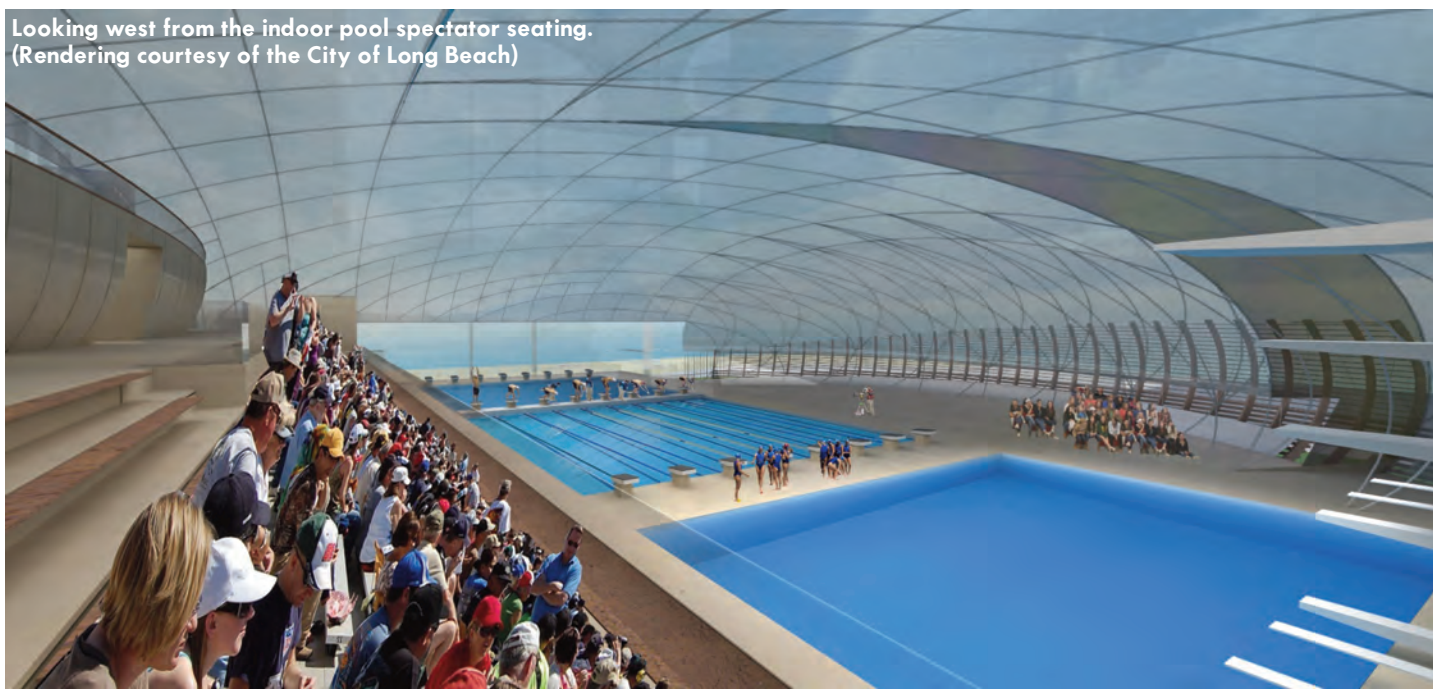




Looking south from above Olympic Plaza.
(Rendering courtesy of the City of Long Beach)



View from the beach. (Rendering
courtesy of the City of Long Beach)



Looking west from the indoor pool spectator seating.
(Rendering courtesy of the City of Long Beach)



View from the southeast outdoor pool deck.
(Rendering courtesy of the City of Long Beach)

Belmont Plaza Pool

(Continued From Page 1)

from its intended use to the cost. Even those in favor of the proposed project admit the \$103 million price tag seems a bit excessive. However, those who oppose the project cite the cost as a reason to stop it in its tracks.

“Why [is the city] moving forward and asking for approval of a project with undefined costs?” Miller said. “That figure of \$103 million, they admit that’s not a true cost. They’ve stated publicly that the cost will not be known until after the city council gives approval and an actual construction design is put together and submitted.”

Tom Modica, assistant city manager for Long Beach, admitted that the estimate made in 2014 is subject to change further along in the process. He explained this is because through the entitlement process, with the planning commission, the coastal commission and appeals, the design could be altered, which would naturally change the cost for better or worse. For this reason, a true projection of cost cannot be determined until a design is approved and finalized.

The proposed budget encompasses the demolition of the old building, planning and design of the new facility, permitting, construction management and actual construction cost, according to Modica. He said that little more than \$10 million has been spent so far on the demolition and preliminary designs.

A major source of concern for both Kajer and Miller is that the city’s Tidelands Operations Fund is funding the project, which is in large part tied to oil revenue generated by Tidelands. When the project was first proposed with its \$103 million budget, oil prices were up and budgeted as such, Modica explained. However, when oil prices crashed, Tidelands monies took a hit and pool funding came into question.

“Of the \$103 million project budget, we have \$60 million that was set aside in cash,” Modica said. “That was done through a prioritization of Tidelands dollars back in 2016. In the [fiscal year] ’17 budget, the city added an additional \$1.5 million in [Tidelands] funding toward the project. So approximately \$61.5 million is funded of the \$103 million.”

To make up the roughly \$42 million discrepancy, Modica said the city is looking at various strategies, including re-

"I'm a supporter of the whole idea of Long Beach as an aquatic capital. That's a fine notion. I'd like to see it done so that it works, though. My concern over the economics of this is that it would not work in that location in Belmont Shore. It's not an accessible location for the traffic and the parking requirements that spectators would need."

Jeff Miller, Belmont Shore Resident

gional, state and federal grants and available county park money, as well as private fundraising and donations.

"This pool has been such a special facility in the hearts and minds of the aquatics community and has produced some world-class swimmers and also some very successful people," Modica said. "We believe that there's an opportunity to ask them to donate back to the creation of a new facility."

Last week, the city began a search for a fundraising consultant to assist in the process. Bids for the contract are due by Friday, April 7, and can be made by contacting Regina Benavides at 562/570-7062 or regina.beavides@longbeach.gov.

When asked if there is a scenario in which General Fund money would be used for the project, Modica said that none has been allocated for the pool to date and that

"future funding sources would be something the city council would decide."

Miller explained that the problem with the project being funded by Tidelands funds is that there are more than \$300 million in Tidelands projects that the city has presented and prioritized. By allocating more than two-thirds of current available funds to the pool, many projects will be postponed. Miller and Kajer said other Tidelands projects are more important than the pool.

Modica confirmed that available Tidelands funds at the time projects were prioritized totaled roughly \$99 million. However, he pointed out that the initial \$60 million was set aside for the pool prior to city staff being asked to prioritize Tidelands projects. According to Modica, when the list was prioritized, no money was added or taken away from pool funds and remaining funds were allocated to other projects accordingly.

Some of the current projects still being funded by Tidelands money include concession improvements along the beach, which were completely unfunded before the prioritization, and the Naples seawall, in addition to a number of bathroom, lighting and safety projects. Modica admitted that lower-priority projects would be held off until funds are available but that they would be completed over time.

Beyond the initial cost of the project, Miller said he is concerned with the ongoing maintenance and operational costs of the facility.

"The maintenance and operational costs of a facility like this are not defined in the entire design process," Miller said. "Those costs were never really brought to light.

When asked if there is a scenario in which General Fund money would be used for the project, Modica said that none has been allocated for the pool to date and that "future funding sources would be something the city council would decide."

Those costs are very high because of the nature of the competitive pool."

However, Modica explained that there has been an initial analysis as part of the fiscal guidelines of the project, though it is subject to change for the same reasons that the total project cost might. After revenue from special events and other uses is taken into consideration, the net maintenance cost of the pool is about \$1.3 million annually and would be factored into the Tidelands budget, according to Modica.

Miller said that he believes it is important to keep Long Beach vibrant, up-to-date and attractive but that a beachside pool is not the best use of Tidelands funds. Also, aside from the cost, Miller and Kajer said the project has other issues that they think are red flags.

"I'm a supporter of the whole idea of Long Beach as an aquatic capital. That's a fine notion," Miller said. "I'd like to see it done so that it works, though. My concern over the economics of this is that it would not work in that location in Belmont Shore. It's not an accessible location for the traffic and the parking requirements that spectators would need."

Miller and Kajer contend that there is not enough parking for spectators and visitors of the pool when combined with beachgoers, the new Olympix Fitness gym, pier and pier-adjacent businesses and residents. Additionally, Miller said the EIR and city officials deny that parking could pose a problem, completely ignoring what he calls the "ground truth" of the full lots on a hot summer day.

Lucy Johnson, a boardmember of the Aquatic Capital of America Foundation (ACA), disagrees, saying the more than 1,000 spaces of surrounding parking have never been an issue in the nearly 50 years she has used the site's pool.

"Even for a big event like the national championships, the last third of that lot was never full. Teams come in a bus or a van. [Parking] is absolutely not an issue," Johnson said. "We've had two Olympic trials, two men's NCAA championships, high school championships every year, 26 out of the first 29 water polo championships. And we've never had a problem."

Johnson added that the previous pool, which opened in 1968, had seating for upwards of 2,400 spectators, while the proposed project only contains seating for 1,250. She said that the city is requiring an approved parking plan, including a person directing traffic, for any event that expects 450 or more spectators – a requirement Johnson called absurd.

In terms of seating, those for and against the project take issue. Richard Foster, president of the Aquatics Capital of America Foundation Board, said the

(Please Continue To Page 14)

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Belmont Plaza Pool

(Continued From Page 13)

seating is not enough, pointing out that larger national events and many international events require more seating. He said this would lead to events opting for other venues such as Federal Way Aquatic Center in Washington or Indiana University, which seat 2,500 and 4,500, respectively.

Modica added that space for temporary seating is available for up to 3,000 spectators at the outdoor pool, should an event require more space. This seating would be rented, and not owned, by the city.

Miller and Kajer, on the other hand, contend that the proposed spectator seating implies the facility is not a municipal pool being built for use by residents but rather as an event space.

“When you talk about this aquatic center

and what the city might hope to get from it in terms of increased tax revenue, it means that fully a third of the year, in terms of days, the pool [is] unavailable for public use,” Kajer said. “All of the things that make this a destination for these types of events means that the public can’t use it for a third of the year.”

Kajer is referring to a city document that identified potential events at the pool and the total number of days those events would utilize the facility. Between swimming, diving and water polo events at various levels of competition, the city identified 135 days of potential events.

Johnson and Foster pointed out that, first and foremost, those numbers are speculative and would most likely be less, as the city would not be awarded every event. However, more importantly, based on the design of the proposed complex, the public would still be able to use the facility during events.

Johnson noted that the proposed facility includes two 50-meter pools, a separate diving well, a recreational pool, a therapy teaching pool, a small spa near the diving well and a larger spa for the general public – a total of seven bodies of water.

“With having the two pools, they won’t have to close both pools [for events]. They can still have one for recreation, which serves our public much better,” Johnson said.

With regard to the location of the pool, the EIR identified three other locations that could accommodate the project, including Harry Bridges Memorial Park, a lot near the convention center and a lot on Queen Mary property. Kajer noted that each of these locations are along the coast, and the EIR neglected other neighborhoods for the sole purpose of being able to maintain use of Tidelands funds.

Kajer believes that to refer to Long Beach

as the “Aquatics Capital of America,” the city must invest in pools around the city. She pointed out that while there are additional public pools, the city only has three municipal pools, including the temporary Belmont Pool, the King Park Pool and the Silverado Park Pool. Kajer explained that these three sites are not enough to service the various communities throughout the city.

On the flip side, Foster and Johnson pointed out that the project has always been portrayed as a revitalization of the former pool. As a revitalization project, Johnson said it would stand to reason that it would be located on or near the original site. Also, Johnson said the beach location played a big role in attracting events in the past.

As for Kajer’s assertion that other communities would be better served with a pool, Johnson noted that the city already owns the temporary pool in Belmont.

“We have a temporary pool sitting in the parking lot right now,” Johnson said. “I’m talking to [9th District Councilmember] Rex Richardson and [8th District Councilmember] Al Austin and saying that I will do everything in my power to move [the temporary pool] to one of those districts.”

Kajer and Miller also question the process of stakeholder and community outreach to determine the residential community’s wants and needs versus the aquatics community’s wants and needs.

“There was a stakeholder committee set up to guide the development process. There [was] only one representative on that stakeholder committee that represents residents,” Miller said. “The majority of the stakeholders [were] people who have an economic interest in swimming and diving and those events. That was the driving committee. The economics of it lead from that, and the beach location is the costliest factor.”

Johnson was a member of the committee, which was the result of then-Councilmember Gary DeLong’s request to gain input from stakeholders. Committee members were selected by the city manager, and they held three meetings that focused solely on the needs and wants of stakeholders, according to Modica. The committee did not play a role in site location or design, but rather in specific elements such as the number and types of bodies of water and of seating that would accommodate residents and events, Modica explained.

Johnson also explained that a number of community meetings were held, including a meeting at the SeaPort Marina Hotel hosted by Suzie Price that asked for public input regarding design elements and the wants of residents. Several hundred community members attended the meeting, according to Johnson. Additionally, Johnson pointed out that the EIR was circulated and was open to public comment, which was also taken into consideration.

“Most of the people support the project,” Johnson said. “They use it, they understand it and they want to see something there. They understand the history and the importance of the project to the city.”

According to Modica, if the project keeps to its current schedule and attains full funding, construction is anticipated to begin in October 2018, with an 18-month build-out period. However, Kajer said she and Miller intend to seek the advice of legal counsel if the project is approved and taken to city council, which could lead to a formal appeal. ■



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Labor Protests At Downtown Hotels

(Continued From Page 1)

As of Friday, February 17, the National Labor Relations Board had no record of any such petitions filed for either hotel, according to a board spokesperson.

Lorena Lopez, director and organizer for Unite Here Local 11 in Long Beach, told the Business Journal the union is not pursuing this method of unionization. "We have not filed for an election, no," Lopez said. "Workers are organizing, and they are looking for a fair process to unionize."

The common alternative to filing a petition for an election overseen by the NLRB is a process called a card check neutrality agreement.

Card check is a process of unionization in which employees sign forms, or "cards," stating they wish to join a union. If more than 50% of employees sign cards indicating they wish to unionize, the employer may voluntarily accept unionization without an NLRB-overseen election.

Lopez confirmed that the union is seeking a card check neutrality agreement. "The card check neutrality agreement is a process that ensures the employer will remain neutral," she said. "That's what we want. We want neutrality."

Before it begins collecting signatures, the union wants the hotel to commit to remaining neutral and allowing the process to move forward, according to Lopez.

While the NLRB process is a blind vote in which voters remain anonymous, card check neutrality is not an anonymous process in that, by signing a card, employees are in essence signing their name to their vote.

A spokesperson for the Westin Long Beach sent the Business Journal a statement indicating support of an NLRB secret ballot process.

"We support our associates' right to decide whether to participate in activities protected by federal labor laws and to decide the important question of whether to be represented by a union," the Westin statement read.

The statement continued, "The best way for our associates to determine if they want such representation is through a secret ballot election overseen by the National Labor Relations Board, as that agency has been doing for over 80 years. We also believe that the associates should have access to information from all sources before voting."

"The union, however, wants our associates to make a decision based only on information provided by the union. Additionally, the union does not want to allow the associates to make this decision in the privacy of a voting booth. Rather, the union wants them to decide in the presence of union representatives. We do not believe the union's position respects our associates' rights."

The Renaissance has declined to comment on issues pertaining to the labor disputes.

In addition to this unionization campaign, Unite Here Local 11 is advocating for a city ordinance related to hotel workers. "We have been asking the mayor and the council to put forward an ordinance that will help these women deal with harassment in those hotels," Lopez said in a previous interview with the Business Journal.

She has not seen any movement among the city council or the mayor's office to initiate the creation of such an ordinance, she noted. "We haven't seen anything.



Protestors advocating for unionization of the Westin Long Beach and Renaissance Long Beach inflated a giant bed bug outside the Westin on February 24. They reportedly asked exiting guests of the hotel if they were aware they could receive \$25 refunds if they witnessed bed bugs in their rooms. These protests are organized by the union Unite Here Local 11. (Photographs by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

We're hoping that the city feels for these women and the leadership is doing something," she said.

Input From Workers

Workers at the hotels are divided into two camps: pro-union and anti-union. But without any signatures collected, it's difficult to know which way the tide is turning.

Rosa Casarrubias has worked as a waitress at the Westin Long Beach for 10 years and was one of the workers to initially call Unite Here Local 11 for assistance, she told the Business Journal.

"I called the union because of all the harassment and bullying I have been going through [that] I reported to human resources, to the general manager, even the corporation," she said. "And they never listen to me."

Casarrubias alleges she was harassed by coworkers and managers, and made official complaints to that effect five years ago. She also said she has worked overtime and had to skip 10-minute breaks without being paid for that time.

Jose Nuñez Diaz has worked in housekeeping at the Renaissance Long Beach for nearly 14 years. Via a Unite Here translator, he told the Business Journal he wants the hotel to unionize so he can receive better benefits and so that his workload will not be overburdensome.

"It is extremely stressful to work and to do all the work they assign us to. And if we are part of the union, we will have the right to negotiate that," Nuñez Diaz said. He also said that he has participated in protests in front of the hotel, which causes his supervisors to become "very angry" with him.

"This is my city. I live in Long Beach," Nuñez Diaz said. "And the reason why I am fighting is so that I can have a better future in my city and so that all my coworkers can have a better future."

David Gonzalez, who has worked in bus service for eight years at the Westin,

does not want the hotel to unionize. "It's a good atmosphere that we have going on right now. I've been there for eight years, and they've taken really great care of us," he told the Business Journal in an interview in late January.

The Westin's working environment is one built on teamwork, according to Gonzalez. "If we need help, managers will come help us. Our own general manager will be bus-ing tables with us if we need it," he said. "We've never had problems with management, with employees. The people who want the union are the people who are lazy and who don't want to work as a team."

Gonzalez said that Unite Here has employed intimidating tactics to convince workers to sign documents in support of unionizing.

"The families [of workers] are scared," Gonzalez said. "They don't give you an option. It's either sign up or we'll harass you, or we'll follow you until you actually sign up." Gonzalez likened this behavior to stalking. "They've been to employees' homes. Especially if they find out you want to go against them, they start going to people's houses," he said.

Long Beach Police Commander Robert Smith oversaw the department's West Division, which includes downtown, until recently. He said in a February 6 interview with the Business Journal that he has not heard about any such incidents.

"Here's what I would say: If there are instances where somebody felt their safety was in jeopardy or somebody were stalking them, on either side, I would encourage you to encourage them to call and report that so we could collect all the facts and investigate it if it's appropriate and also submit something like that for filing consideration," he said.

Smith added, "The last thing I want to happen for the community down there on all sides is for someone to not report a potential crime or threat against them, or a situation where they feel their safety is in

jeopardy and they are not inclined to reach out to the police."

In a prior interview with the Business Journal, Lopez said that Unite Here does send representatives to hotel employees' homes. Coworkers in support of unionization also "will do whatever it takes to try to talk to them about their support," she said. She believes many workers at the hotels are scared of retaliation from their employers.

Gonzalez said he believes few employees at either hotel support unionization. He has spent money out of his own pocket to purchase anti-union pins, which some Westin workers are reportedly wearing while on duty.

Councilmember Involvement

With no end in sight to protesting and unionization efforts, 2nd District Councilmember Jeannine Pearce has been pressed by frustrated nearby residents for solutions.

As reported in the last edition of the Business Journal, the city's health department has found the protests to be in violation of the city's noise ordinance every time they have taken a decibel reading of the activity. Two protestors recently pled no contest to disturbing the peace, and another three are currently being prosecuted for the same offense.

Prior to becoming a city councilmember in 2016, Pearce was a director for the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), a nonprofit organization dedicated to workers' rights and healthy communities. In that role, she worked directly with Unite Here Local 11 and participated in their labor protests at the Hilton Long Beach – bullhorns and all. It has been "several years" since she was on a picket line, she stated.

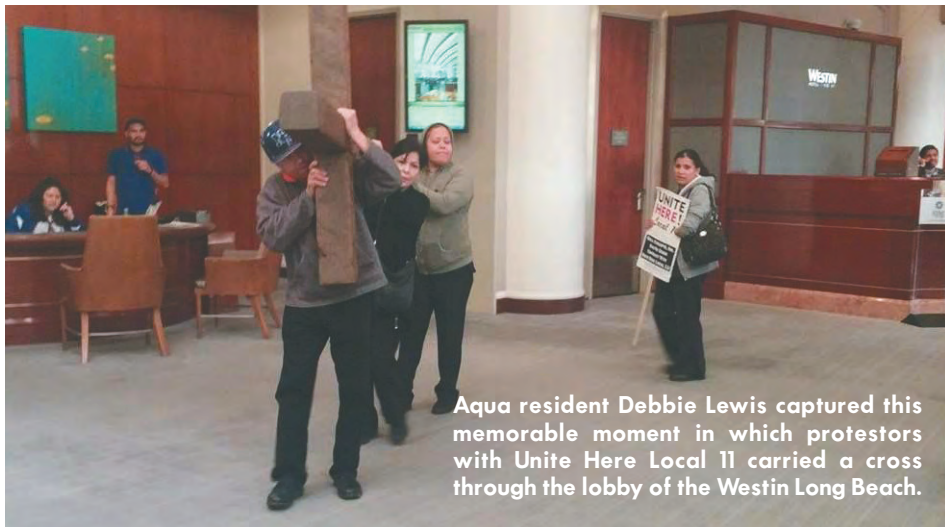
Pearce described her role in efforts to unionize the Westin and Renaissance as follows: "My role was to educate community members, to bring people to the table and to make sure they were hearing the stories from employees, to give them the opportunity to engage with management if they wanted it, [and] to make sure that they were talking to their elected officials about what they heard. And that was my role as director." She noted that she has met with many hotel workers of both the Westin and Renaissance.

Pearce said that claims that LAANE is a union front organization are insulting.

"LAANE really is not a union. It's not something that goes out and says you have to unionize," she said. "It's an organization that says we want . . . standards for industry across the board." LAANE also works with nonprofits involved with environmental issues, women's rights and more, she noted. She estimated that "less than 25%" of LAANE's funding comes from labor groups.

Upon deciding to run for council, Pearce said she stepped away from heavy involvement in LAANE's Long Beach activities. LAANE did not contribute any funds to support her campaign, but Unite Here contributed \$400, she said.

Shortly after becoming councilmember, Pearce traveled to Utah to meet with the majority owner of the Westin, Utah Retirement Systems. She said the purpose of that meeting was not to push for unionization. Rather, she went to encourage dialogue between all involved parties.



Aqua resident Debbie Lewis captured this memorable moment in which protestors with Unite Here Local 11 carried a cross through the lobby of the Westin Long Beach.

Because the hotel is up for sale, she also wanted to encourage its current ownership to sell to a party that “understands what labor peace is.”

According to Pearce, Unite Here does not pursue unionization campaigns unless workers are mostly receptive to their efforts. “What happens in a union campaign [is], before Unite Here will go in and say, ‘We’re going to spend resources to try to organize,’ they talk to people quietly. And they do not ever go into a hotel and spend resources unless they have 50% or more of the workers who say, ‘Yes, we want to go down this process,’” she explained.

This is the same percentage required for a card check neutrality agreement.

Pearce pointed out that in 2013, Unite Here Local 11 came to an agreement with the Hyatt Regency Long Beach and Hyatt Centric The Pike to undertake both the NLRB blind-vote process and the card check process. Workers voted to unionize.

“The fact is, nobody is coming to the table right now, and they can’t even have those discussions in a peaceful way that demonstrate respect and dignity and take away the fear,” Pearce said. “Having a third party come in and take over that process is the only way that workers are ever going to feel safe.”

She reflected, “The best thing we can do as elected officials [and] as residents is to say, ‘How do we get a process?’ Whatever the workers decide, if they vote with NLRB and it’s not for the union, at least there was a fair process that had oversight, that was transparent, [and] it was in a place taken away from fear.”

Pearce expressed that she was content with any method of voting agreed upon by all parties.

In our previous issue, the Business Journal interviewed three residents of the Aqua who say their lives have been adversely impacted by the noise from the protests.

Pearce said that only the “same five people” have been expressing concerns about noise generated by the protests.

Kyle Daly, another resident of the Aqua building across the street from the Westin, called Pearce’s assessment that few people are discontent with the protests to be “a gross understatement.” He did, however, point out that there are numerous Aqua and other area residents who support the protests or are indifferent.

Daly has not called Pearce but has called the police department, the mayor’s office and the city prosecutor’s office to complain about protest noise. He acknowledged that perhaps he and others should stop relying on Debbie Lewis, another Aqua resident, to take up the mantle of fighting against

protest-related noise disturbances and also lend their voices to the situation if their lack of input is causing the impression that few people are bothered by the situation.

Michael Massie lived in the Aqua for about eight years until this November, when he moved to another city in the region for work. “I am not going to say that the protestors didn’t interrupt my day. On numerous occasions, they certainly did,” he said. “But I think they were affective at what they were trying to do, which was to draw attention to the situation with the Westin. I didn’t find it particularly troublesome. It was certainly occasionally an inconvenience on Saturday mornings. But I didn’t find it onerous at all.”

Massie described his political viewpoint as fairly left-leaning and a bit libertarian in nature. “I think that people have the right to assemble and speak and make their cause known,” he said. “I am not intimately familiar with the labor practices of the Westin, but I tend to think that if maybe someone has a labor complaint or wishes to organize, that is clearly within their rights.”

Another downtown resident, Lynne Smothers Reese, said she supports the protestors. “I live down the street and I have actually participated in some of the protests at the hotel. I think they treat their employees shabbily and that the protests are an effective way to draw attention to the issue.”

Daly wants to know why the protests haven’t stopped.

“It seems like there should have been a vote. That’s what I can’t figure out,” Daly said. “They talk about a fair election process. Who is preventing them from holding the vote? It seems like it’s just bullying tactics to force it upon them.”

Daly continued, “They have a right to unionize in the appropriate manner. And if they can’t do it through the established statutory procedures of the election process and whatever else the NLRA [National Labor Relations Act] allows, then they are just going to stand there and have no intention of ever stopping with the bullhorns until the other side – the Westin or the Renaissance – just caves.”

Allegations Of Intimidation On Part Of Employers, Police

Pearce expressed concern about accounts of intimidation by superiors at the hotels. She said one such incident occurred after as many as 50 workers at the Renaissance notified management of their intent to unionize and aired grievances about unpaid rest breaks and other labor violations.

“A week later, they got a cake that said, ‘Welcome to the union,’” she recounted.

“And in the lunchroom – this is a story that has been relayed to me, and I know there was an unfair labor practice that was filed against this action – they took the cake and threw it away and said, ‘You can’t have this here.’”

Unite Here Local 11 sent the Business Journal NLRB settlements related to complaints at both the Renaissance and Westin. The nature of those complaints was not included in the settlement documents. To comply with the settlement agreements, both hotels were required to post notices informing workers of their right to unionize and asserting that their employers would not prevent them from doing so.

Unite Here’s Lopez believes the Long Beach Police Department’s regular response to calls for service related to the protests at the hotels is intimidating in nature. “The Long Beach police have used tactics of intimidation and retaliation to the protests,” she said.

Asked for specific incidences of intimidation or retaliation, Lopez replied, “When there is a protest, you have two, three, four, five police cars [responding with] two police officers in each car for a group of eight or 10 people protesting outside a hotel.” She said the police signal that they are there only to protect guests and the employer. “We have gone to the Long Beach City Council to complain about these practices from the Long Beach police. We have filed complaints with internal affairs.”

In response to these comments, the police department sent a statement to the Business Journal. “In an effort to ensure public safety and the safety of responding officers, the police department deploys resources based on the totality of reported circumstances, including call type and the number of individuals involved,” the statement read.

“The police department has met with community stakeholders, including union representatives, to discuss the concerns of the involved parties. . . . The police department has also provided an overview of the internal affairs process, including the mechanism that should be utilized to report any potential acts of misconduct,” the police department stated.

Worker Lawsuits

Both hotels are embroiled in lawsuits filed by employees. Class action suits against both hotels allege labor violations, including failure to pay compensation for meal and rest periods, for all hours worked, and for overtime hours. Other allegations include minimum wage violations, failure to reimburse for expenses or losses incurred due to performing work duties, failure to provide accurate itemized wage statements, unfair business practices and more.

These lawsuits are ongoing. A status conference for the class action suit against the Renaissance was held on February 24, and a status conference for the suit against the Westin is planned for June 15, according to Los Angeles County Superior Court documents.

In another lawsuit against the Renaissance Long Beach and a male employee, two female employees are fighting for damages due to alleged assault, battery, sexual battery, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, retaliation and other complaints. Both plaintiffs are Latina women

employed at the hotel. One works as a banquet server and the other as a housekeeper.

The accused employee is a supervisory banquet captain at the hotel. Allegations detailed in Los Angeles Superior Court documents include vividly recounted incidents of verbal harassment and sexual assault.

One account in court documents details a 2012 incident in which another male employee allegedly trapped one of the defendants in a storage room and sexually assaulted her. The defendant said she reported this to human resources, after which she was granted a week off for bereavement. When she returned she was allegedly told no action could be taken because such complaints must be resolved within a week.

The Renaissance did not provide comment regarding these lawsuits.

A spokesperson for the Westin Long Beach wrote via e-mail that the hotel respects all its employees. “As a top hospitality employer, we operate in accordance with California labor laws and are committed to maintaining positive relations with all of our associates,” the statement read.

In May 2016, a report on “compliance with domestic and international labor standards” at the Westin was published by the University of California, Irvine School of Law’s Immigrants Rights Clinic. The report was initiated due to a request from Unite Here Local 11, which was made in the summer of 2015, according to one of the report’s authors, Sam Cretcher.

UCI’s Immigrant Rights Clinic concluded that the Westin violated wage and hour laws by denying uninterrupted rest and meal breaks and failing to pay housekeeping staff for time spent preparing for their work.

The report’s authors came to these conclusions without communicating with hotel officials.

The report also alleges that the Westin threatened to lower workers’ wages if they unionized and that the hotel denied the union “equal access to the workforce” to give the union the opportunity to counter “anti-union messages” from the Westin.

UCI’s clinic relied upon documentation provided by Unite Here Local 11, as well as documents from LAANE. Also factored into UCI’s report: interviews with and sworn affidavits by hotel employees; hotel documents including pay stubs, the employee handbook and the benefits packet; and communications between the union and the hotel’s principal owner.

Employees were not selected at random for interviews. Rather, Unite Here Local 11 connected the UCI clinic with employees. “Once connected, we independently conducted every interview. Union representatives were only present upon request for translation assistance,” Sam Cretcher, one of the report’s authors, told the Business Journal via e-mail.

“Neither the hotel nor its parent companies were contacted about the report,” Cretcher wrote. “The nature of the report and the evidence on which it relied did not require immediate comment. As stated in the report’s conclusion, the purpose of our publication was to aid the hotel and other decision-making entities with useful information in responding to workers’ appeals for change.” ■

Ports Begin Work On Draft Clean Air Action Plan

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor

Although the comment period for the San Pedro Bay ports' joint discussion document outlining proposed updates to their Clean Air Action Plan (CAAP) was set to close in mid-February, the ports' harbor commissions both agreed to extend the comment period as a draft document is created.

Stakeholder groups like the Pacific

Merchant Shipping Association (PMSA) had been requesting an extension of the comment period. They have also requested that the ports provide cost assessments for the proposed CAAP updates, as well as an analysis of how the proposals might impact the ports' competitiveness.

At a February 13 Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners meeting, Heather Tomley, director of environmental planning for the port, indicated staff would

provide these analyses in supplemental documents. She told the Business Journal that the ports intend to draw from a number of sources.

The Clean Air Action Plan sets air emissions reductions goals for the ports and outlines means to achieve those goals. The discussion document proposed air emissions reductions in line with the state's requirements to reduce harmful air emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. It also suggested converting to zero emission trucks by 2035, and converting all terminals' cargo handling equipment to zero emissions technology by 2030.

The PMSA, which represents terminal operators and shipping companies, has concerns about the economic viability of these goals. The organization commissioned a study by Long Beach-based Moffatt & Nichol which found that converting terminal operations to all-electric technology by 2030 would cost in excess of \$20 billion.

Long Beach Harbor Commissioner Rich Dines said at the February 13 board meeting that he thought converting terminal equipment could cost as little as \$2 billion. He told the Business Journal that electrified cargo-handling equipment of various kinds has already been developed by Chinese-based firm BYD. Some are already in use at the Port of Los Angeles, while prototypes for others are scheduled, he said.

"I think that \$2 billion is a conservative

number. I actually think we could do it for less," Dines said.

"The solutions the CAAP proposes are more than what is necessary to reach those goals," Thomas Jelenic, former POLB employee and current vice president of PMSA, told the Business Journal. He said use of ultra low nitrogen-oxide emitting technologies, which are typically powered by renewable fuels, would allow the ports to attain its air emissions reductions goals for half the cost.

Thomas Lawson, president of the California Natural Gas Vehicle Coalition, told the Business Journal he thinks the truck conversion timeline should be pushed up to 2023 to address air quality impacts to residents who live near the ports sooner rather than later. However, he would like the requirement to include near-zero emission trucks. "I think it's great if we have a zero emission Class A truck by 2023. I don't currently see that technology that far along," he said.

Dines does not believe zero emission trucks capable of hauling cargo will be available by 2035 given the current rate of technological development. "I do believe in the short term, near zero emission is something we can achieve much sooner than that," he said.

"There might be some debate over the timelines that we proposed for 2035 for trucks and 2030 for cargo handling equipment," Tomley said. "Based off of those comments, we are going to be taking a very close look at all of those timelines that we've laid out as we're working on the next draft document."



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Tomley said the ports are trying to balance a variety of needs in this process. "We're trying to balance the environmental goals and the needs of the local community for reducing health impacts," she said. "But at the same time, balancing that with the industry and the businesses and the potential costs associated with moving forward with these strategies on these timelines, and making sure we develop programs that can be economically viable."

Tomley estimated that a Draft CAAP might be completed within 12 weeks, after which time a new comment period will begin for that document. "We would allow people to weigh in on that updated draft," She said. "Then following that next public comment period we would take the document back, finalize it and then present that to our boards for approval this summer." ■

Local Business Leaders Declare Support For Immigrants And Refugees

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
 Senior Writer

With more than 230 corporations – including Apple, Facebook and Coca Cola – speaking out against federal travel bans on immigrants and refugees, 27 Long Beach businesses have issued a joint statement in opposition.

Tom Bowman, president of Bowman Change Inc., is spearheading the local effort to bring businesses together in solidarity on the issue.

"We often overlook the small and medium-sized businesses that contribute half of America's GDP," Bowman said. "Here we see some of them stepping forward collectively to join larger firms in standing up for their employees, neighbors and families. Together, they are affirming the authentic American values of diversity, equal opportunity and equal justice."

"A workforce that includes the best and brightest from around the globe increases America's competitive advantage," Bowman added.

Though President Donald Trump's original executive order regarding immigrants from seven Middle Eastern countries has since been reversed by a federal court of appeals, a revised version of the order is expected this week, according to reports by The Associated Press.

"Today, we stand together in opposing discrimination of any kind and, in particular, the President's executive orders on immigration," the joint statement reads. "We encourage our suppliers, customers and fellow business leaders to join with us in calling on our elected representatives at every level of government to defend the core values upon which a diverse, prosperous and free society depends." ■

Long Beach-Based ALTA Environmental To Host Stormwater Workshop At The Grand On March 16

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
 Senior Writer

Long Beach-based ALTA Environmental will host a workshop on California Industrial Stormwater General Permit Implementation on Thursday, March 16, from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at The Grand, located at 4101 E. Willow St.

ALTA hopes to educate local businesses on avoiding compliance issues and potential third-party lawsuits.

"We are very experienced in stormwater regulatory issues, and we look forward to helping businesses and others in Southern California comply with the permit's guidelines," David Renfrew, director of water resources at ALTA, said in a statement.

Renfrew will discuss stormwater pollution prevention plan implementation, numeric action levels, and sampling and laboratory procedures, among other topics.

Workshop registration ends Friday, March 10, and costs \$125 per person and is limited to 50 people. To register, visit altaenviro.com/store/p14/IGP/training.

Breakfast, snacks and lunch will be provided to business owners, facility managers and operators, sampling technicians and EHS and compliance managers who attend the workshop. ■

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Musical Theatre West musical.org (562) 856-1999 ext. 4	Reiner Reading Series: Amour <i>Beverly O'Neill Theater</i> Sun, Mar 12 7pm Broadway in Concert: Susan Egan, Belle in Disney's Broadway Beauty and the Beast <i>Beverly O'Neill Theater</i> Fri, Mar 17 8pm	Reiner Reading Series <i>Terrace Theater</i> Sun, Apr 30 7pm
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Sat, May 20, 21 | 2:30pm

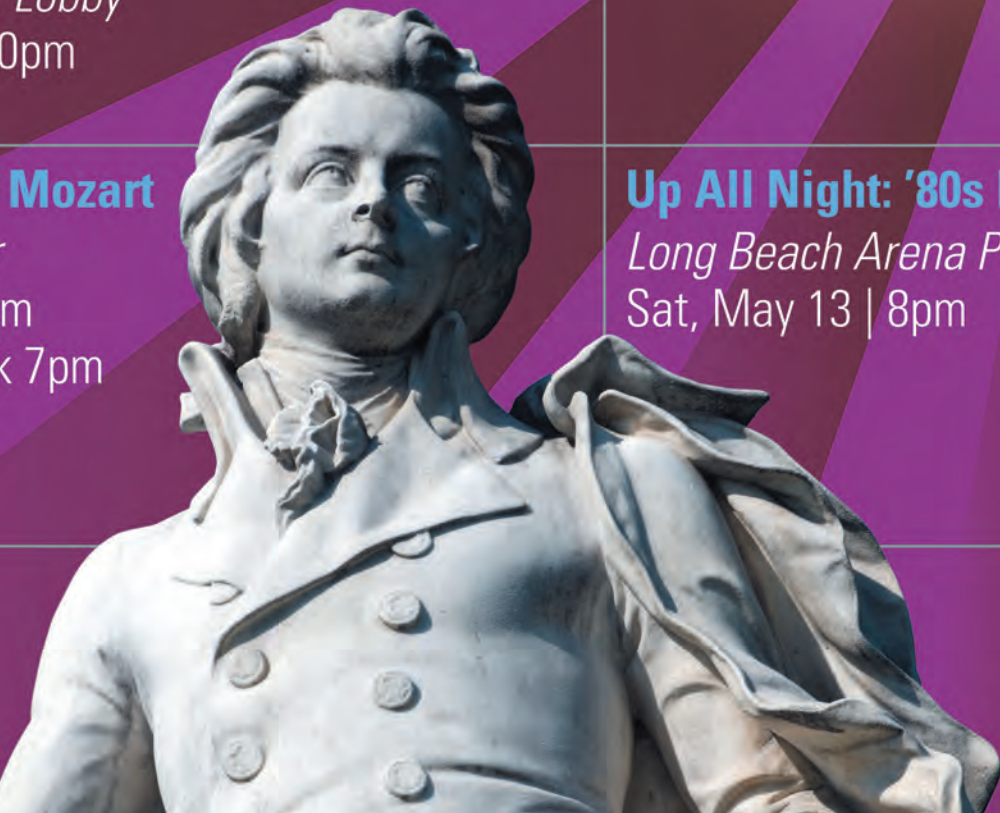


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Up All Night: '80s Music
Long Beach Arena POPS!
Sat, May 13 | 8pm

**JoAnn Falletta
Homecoming**
Terrace Theater
Sat, Jun 10 | 8pm





The Hybrid Imaging Suite at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center "combines the diagnostic capabilities of a catheterization laboratory with the surgical functions of an operating room," according to a hospital spokesperson. It also includes advanced imaging equipment, including 3D reconstruction capabilities. Pictured in the suite, from left, are: Dr. Ankur Gupta, vascular surgeon; Dr. Rodney White, medical director of vascular surgery; and Derek Lester, director of invasive cardiology. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

(Continued From Page 1)

chest/abdomen surgery is now utilized in 50% or more of aortic aneurism cases, according to White.

This procedure has made surgical intervention an option for patients who are too high risk for open-cavity surgeries, White said. "Beyond that, it has made it so that people's disability is reduced a lot," he noted. "They do better in terms of recovery."

Dr. Gregory Thomas, medical director of the MemorialCare Heart & Vascular Institute at Long Beach Memorial, said that having White at the hospital gives vascular patients access to unique, customized surgical solutions.

"If a person has an aneurism here that is expanding, he can put a stent in that's the right size and that has the arteries coming out of the proper spots," Thomas said, noting that White creates this in the operating room for immediate use. "That's very unusual to have available."

Thomas said the hospital is lucky to have White leading its vascular program. "Some people can say they have saved lives, but he has saved thousands and thousands of

lives across the world with these inventions. He's very humble," Thomas said.

According to the Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS), about 200,000 people in the United States are annually diagnosed with an abdominal aortic aneurism, and about 14,000 Americans die each year when these aneurisms rupture.

Vascular disease can cause the blockage of the carotid arteries, which supply blood to the brain. Such a blockage can lead to strokes, which are the third leading cause of death in the U.S., according to SVS. A "large proportion" of these strokes are caused by vascular disease in the carotid arteries.

Peripheral artery disease, which involves arteries running down the legs, affects between eight to 12 million people in the United States, according to SVS. White pointed out that the death rate for this type of vascular disease is higher than that of breast cancer patients.

White worked at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center for about 39 years and served as vice chairman of vascular surgery research, division

chief and vascular surgery fellowship program director. He remains a professor of surgery at the UCLA School of Medicine. He has been working with LBMMC for about 15 years through a fellowship program.

At the hospital, White is leading an FDA study of a new kind of stent that addresses dissections (tearing) of the ascending aorta – the portion of the blood vessel that curves to the heart. "This is a test of accuracy and long-term durability, basically," White said of the study.

"Every hour, 1% of patients with this condition die," Thomas said. "There is really nothing more fatal like that," he noted. "When I have a patient with an ascending aortic dissection – when you rip the aorta – I tell the patient and their family, 'You are the sickest patient in this hospital.'"

Surgery to repair this portion of the aorta must be done as soon as possible. "It's a fire-drill emergency to get it done," Thomas said. "And if we can do it with a stent, as you might imagine, it is going to be less invasive and more likely to work with less chance of stroke or other

complications.”

As the head of vascular surgery, White is focusing on expanding the hospital's minimally invasive surgical capabilities related to vascular care and fostering educational opportunities for medical training. He would like to collaborate with other experts in their fields, including Long Beach Memorial's Dr. Daniel Bethencourt, who specializes in robotic-assisted heart valve repair and replacement.

There may be opportunities to integrate the use of robotics in vascular surgery, White said, adding that the hospital already has the technological means and facilities to pursue such an endeavor. “It's in an area that looks like [it has] significant growth potential and really could enhance what Long Beach Memorial could do for the community,” he explained.

Ongoing surgical training is one of the most pressing matters in the health care industry today due to changes in technology and rapid progress, according to White. “In two or three years, [surgeons] have

got to retrain again,” he said. Because minimally invasive surgeries are becoming increasingly common, it is correspondingly more difficult to provide opportunities to train in traditional, open-cavity surgeries, he explained.

White believes minimally invasive surgeries that involve delivering tools like stents or even medicines via catheters fed through blood vessels are the wave of the future. “The one thing about the blood vessels is they sort of connect everywhere [in the body], so it's eventually going to be a means for drug delivery for cancers or implants and organs even,” White said. “This idea of working through the vessels and doing that sort of thing is going to continue and only get exponentially bigger.”

He added, “The challenge is how to keep up with it when it changes so quickly.”

LBMHC's Heart & Vascular Institute is one of the best of its kind in the West, according to Thomas. Its staff continues to pursue unique re-

search in the field. Thomas, for example, is leading a team that studies atherosclerosis in ancient mummies throughout the world. “We found that atherosclerosis is not a disease of modern people. It goes back as far as the ancient Egyptian pharaohs and queens,” he said. To see how an ancient lifestyle may have also played into the disease, he and his team are studying a tribe in Bolivia that leads an ancient lifestyle.

“The whole health care system is

amazingly well put together, and in times when it's hard to survive, they're hanging in there and really making health care progress,” White said of MemorialCare Health System. “I was pleasantly surprised because most institutions are not very enthusiastic about what they are doing in today's environment. And here it's different. There is a very infectious and positive attitude that's probably the most important part of the whole place.” ■



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Early Detection Is Vital To Colon Cancer Prevention

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Writer

Colon cancer is the third most common cancer, behind prostate cancer in men and breast cancer in women, according to Dr. Anoop K. Shah, director of the gastroenterology department at St. Mary Medical Center - Dignity Health. In February 2000, President Clinton dedicated March as National Colon Cancer Awareness Month.

According to cancer.org, more than 130,000 new cases of colorectal (colon and rectal) cancer and 50,000 deaths are expected in the United States alone in 2017. However, if screened for properly, colon cancer is preventable and treatable.

“Probably close to 50% of people are not getting the screening they need,” Shah said. “Three to five years ago, if I gave a lecture it would be up to 60% of people are not getting the screening they need. We’re seeing in the last few years a tremendous drop in colon cancer diagnosis.”

While Shah said the increase in awareness is a good sign, there is still a lot of work to be done to reach more

patients and lessen the number of colon cancer diagnoses. According to Shah, the leading factor for the increase in screenings is that under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), colonoscopies – the most tried and true screening procedure for colon cancer – is 100% free through all insurance companies.

According to Shah, the ACA includes a mandate that requires all insurance companies to cover certain procedures free of charge regardless of the health care plan deductible. The procedures covered are all preventative, including mammograms, pap smears, physicals and colonoscopies, among a few others.

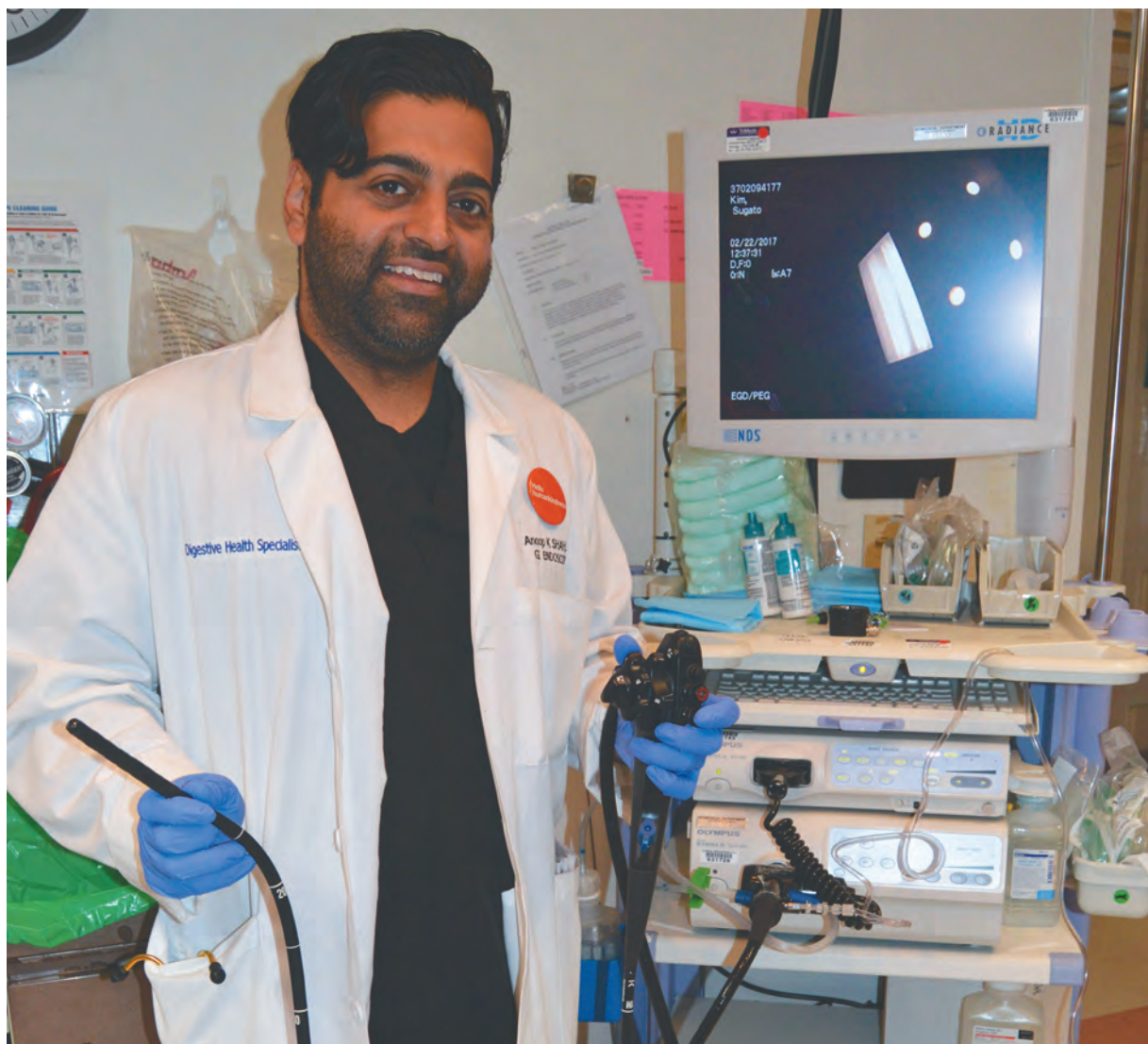
“The government . . . has really made this easier on the patient,” Shah said. “This is a preventative test that’s accepted in a wide body of literature. And for the longest time, insurances weren’t paying for it or were only partially paying for it, which was counterintuitive to the whole premise of preventative care.”

To ensure customers know these preventive procedures are free, Shah said the government randomly audits health care providers to ensure at least 60% of eligible patients were offered them. Shah said his waiting room is often filled with patients holding reminder letters from insurance companies to schedule a colonoscopy.

Around 95% of colon cancer begins as small polyps in the colon that can be easily detected during a colonoscopy, according to Dr. Conrad A. Cox, a gastroenterologist affiliated with Lake-wood Regional Medical Center. Patients are sedated for the procedure, which only lasts between 15 and 20 minutes. A flexible fiber-optic instrument called a colonoscope is fitted with a light and camera and is inserted into the colon to allow doctors to detect polyps that may have formed.

The day before the procedure, patients are put on a special liquid diet to cleanse the colon. Cox said many people find the procedure preparations more difficult and uncomfortable than the actual procedure itself, considering the sedation.

“Polyps are a precursor to cancer, and we find these polyps in about



Dr. Anoop K. Shah, director of the gastroenterology department at St. Mary Medical Center - Dignity Health in Downtown Long Beach, said colon cancer is the third most common cancer but that it is preventable if patients follow recommended screening practices, which include receiving regular colonoscopies beginning at age 50. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)



Face of Hope

David Griffin, 74
Colon Cancer Patient
Hot Rod King

face of Hope

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Goodbye, colon cancer. Hello, hope.

Frequent stomach pains prompted Robert Comer, M.D., to refer David to Long Beach Memorial. *A colonoscopy confirmed colon cancer.* David knew he needed an expert. At the MemorialCare Todd Cancer Institute, David got three. From his surgeon, Steven Grant, M.D., to his oncologist, Nilesh Vora, M.D., and his interventional gastroenterologist, Bhavesh Shah M.D., his team is restoring him back to health. Guided by positivity, David serves as a Face of Hope for others on their road to recovery.



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(Continued From Page 24)

one-quarter of patients,” Cox said. “If we find one or two small polyps, then the recommendation is the next [screening] would be in five to 10 years. If we find three polyps, then we’re thinking the potential for that particular colon to develop these polyps becomes greater, so we increase the intervals.”

If more than four or five polyps are found during a screening, Cox said it might be recommended that the next screening be done the following year. When it comes to screenings, Cox ad-

mitted that while the colonoscopy is the most effective, it is invasive and can be inconvenient. So some patients may not want or cannot have the procedure. However, there are several other options for patients.

Kaiser Permanente offers two other screening procedures that are less invasive than the standard colonoscopy, according to Kaiser gastroenterologist Dr. Kapil R. Mehta. However, he said that each test must be conducted more often, and if there is a positive result, the patient will have to undergo a colonoscopy anyway.

The least invasive alternative is testing for blood in a stool sample. Mehta said the sample could be small and even taken off tissue paper after wiping. It is recommended the test be conducted every year.

Mehta said Kaiser also offers a sigmoidoscopy, which is a less invasive version of a full colonoscopy, where the scope is inserted into the rectum and examines the left portion of the colon. The idea is that if the left portion is clear of polyps, it is very likely the rest is clear also.

Regardless of the type of screening,

if multiple small polyps are discovered in the colon, they can be removed easily during a colonoscopy without surgery. If the lesions are larger, doctors will often take a biopsy to determine if they are cancerous. Benign lesions would be removed, and the patient would continue screenings at shorter intervals. With cancerous lesions, Mehta said a CAT scan could be used to stage the cancer and check for spreading.

“If there’s no spread, which two out of three times is usually the case, then surgery would be an adequate removal. You’d remove that section of the colon and then reattach,” Mehta said “That retains the integrity of the colon and, at the same time, removes the cancer portion of it.”

If cancer cells have spread to adjacent lymph nodes or anywhere else outside the colon, Mehta said the original tumor would be surgically removed from the colon and chemotherapy would be used to eradicate the remaining cancer cells. However, he pointed out that regular screenings often catch polyps before they become cancerous or shortly after, which greatly reduces the likelihood of spreading and increases the chances of survival.

“The survival rate actually ranges from 90% to 100% if we catch it early enough and it’s removed,” Dr. Bhavesh B. Shah, medical director of interventional gastroenterology at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center, said. “Unfortunately, the numbers are not great if we catch the disease later in the process. Some of the studies show the survival rate drop to between 5% and 10%.”

Bhavesh said the drastic decrease in survival rates is a testament to the importance of screening for colon cancer. He said it is one of only a few diseases that can be prevented if appropriate guidelines are followed, namely getting screened at the recommended ages.

For most people, colon cancer screenings are suggested at age 50 and every 10 years thereafter until age 75, unless an excess of polyps or cancer forms, which would result in more frequent screenings. Several exceptions include those who have a family history of colon cancer, people suffering from obesity and African-Ameri-

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cans, who should begin screenings around age 45, according to Bhavesh.

Several risk factors have been linked to or associated with colon cancer, including obesity, alcohol consumption, tobacco use and high-fat diets. Bhavesh acknowledged that these links are not fully proven or backed by comprehensive studies. However, he pointed out that these habits are known to cause several other ailments, so avoiding them keeps people healthier regardless of the link to colon cancer.

Symptoms of colon cancer that should be recognized between screenings – or even before a person reaches the recommended screening age – include blood in the stool, abdominal pain, unexplained weight loss and a change in bowel movements, including constipation.

“I don’t consider March as the only month that we focus on this,” Mehta said. “In today’s day and age, it just makes no sense that we would see as many colon cancers as we do. I think that raising awareness is a huge thing.” ■

FROM THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

The Normal Colon And Rectum

The colon and rectum are parts of the digestive system, which is also called the gastrointestinal (GI) system (see illustration). The colon and rectum make up the large intestine (or large bowel). Most of the large intestine is made up of the colon, a muscular tube about 5 feet long. The colon absorbs water and salt from the remaining food matter after it goes through the small intestine (small bowel).

The waste matter that is left after going through the colon goes into the rectum, the final 6 inches of the digestive system, where it is stored until it passes out of the body through the anus.

Types Of Cancer In The Colon And Rectum

Adenocarcinomas make up more than 95% of colorectal cancers. These cancers start in cells that form glands that make mucus to lubricate the inside of the colon and rectum. When doctors talk about colorectal cancer, they are almost always talking about this type.

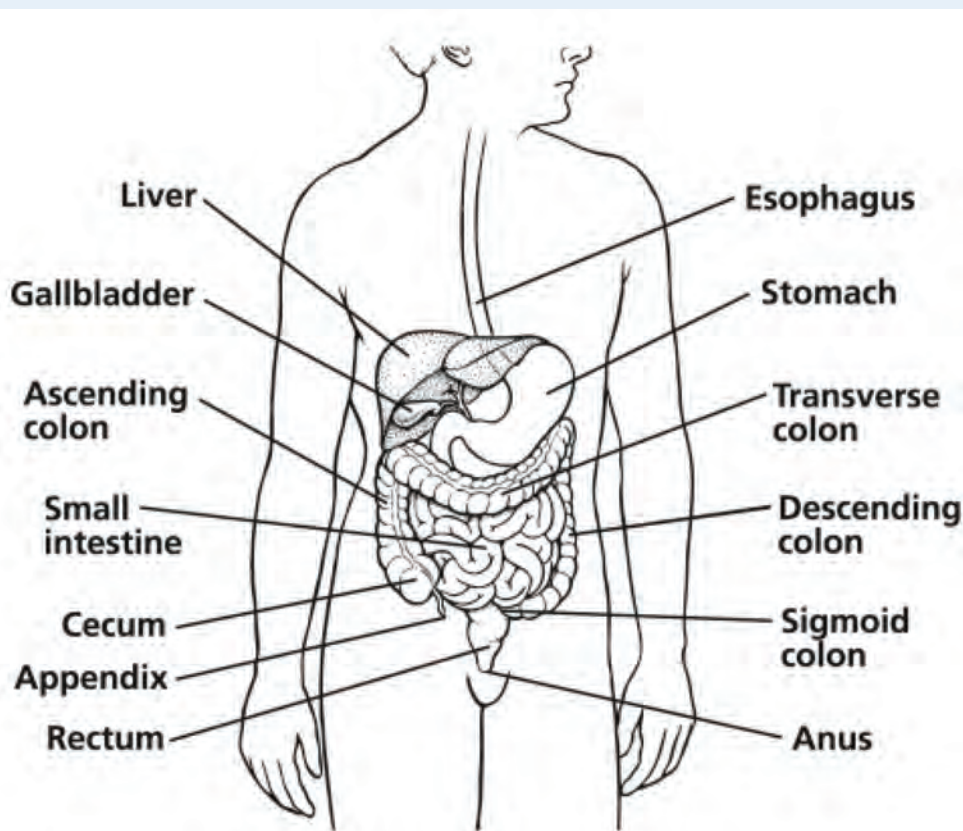
Other, less common types of tumors can also start in the colon and rectum. These include:

Carcinoid tumors start from specialized hormone-making cells in the intestine.

Gastrointestinal stromal tumors (GISTs) start from specialized cells in the wall of the colon called the interstitial cells of Cajal. Some are non-cancerous (benign). These tumors can be found anywhere in the digestive tract, but it is unusual to find them in the colon.

Lymphomas are cancers of immune system cells that typically start in lymph nodes, but they can also start in the colon, rectum, or other organs.

Sarcomas can start in blood vessels, muscle layers, or other connective tissues in the wall of the colon and rectum. Sarcomas of the colon or rectum are rare.



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Creating Healthier Office Environments

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor

The Well Living Lab is a high-tech facility outfitted with technology that allows researchers to change environmental stimuli like light, temperature and sound – as well as floor plan configuration – in an effort to identify how office workers' environments affect them. The lab is a partnership between Delos and the Mayo Clinic. (Photograph provided by the Well Living Lab)



Conserving energy and reducing environmental impacts have been major considerations in designing and constructing new buildings. Now, a new trend for built environments is emerging, particularly when it comes to office space – designing for human wellness.

This effort is being championed by Delos, which pioneered the WELL Building Standard. Much like the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Standard ranks projects based on their environmental friendliness and energy-efficiency, the WELL Building Standard ranks built environments on seven concepts affecting human wellness: air, water, light, nourishment, fitness, comfort and mind.

The company's website notes that people spend 90% of their time indoors. Our indoor, built environments thus "have a profound effect on our well-being."

Delos takes this concept so seriously that it has heavily invested in a futuristic laboratory called the Well Living Lab in Rochester, Minnesota,

adjacent to the Mayo Clinic's headquarters. The Mayo Clinic is a non-profit medical practice, hospital and research group that dates back more than 150 years. It is consistently ranked as one of the nation's best hospitals and is well known for pioneering medical research studies.

The Well Living Lab is a high-tech, 5,500-square-foot space in an office building dubbed the Bio Business Center. Its purpose is to generate research that engenders a deeper understanding of the connection between indoor environments and health.

The lab is reconfigurable into a variety of office layouts and floor plans meant to mimic home environments. This enables researchers to measure how an array of environments could impact health – and what elements of those environments may be better, or worse, for us.

The Well Living Lab is outfitted with sensors that measure the quality of the space and changes in the environment, windows specially equipped to control how much natural light is entering, and full-spec-

trum LED lighting. Human test subjects wear biometric devices to collect data and feedback on how their environment is affecting them.

The lab's reconfigurable ceiling system allows researchers to alter lighting, ventilation and more. Removable floor tiles allow redirection of electricity, plumbing and other infrastructure to allow easy reconfiguration of spaces.

The lab opened in May 2016 and began its first experiment to determine how an office environment affected the health of the workers within it. Specifically, the experiment examined how acoustics, lighting and thermo conditions impact workers, according to Barbara Spurrier, the lab's administrative director.

Test subjects temporarily relocated from their actual offices into the lab, which was configured to mimic their environment, according to Spurrier. The results of the experiment are soon to be released.

Future experiments will focus on how employee performance and productivity are affected by their environ-

ments, according to Spurrier.

Chip Israel, CEO and founder of Long Beach-based Lighting Design Alliance, said designing for wellness is a trend impacting all aspects of the lighting industry. A sampling of projects from LDA's resume include Disney's Aulani resort in Hawaii, The Venetian in Las Vegas, Cedars-Sinai Hospital, Disney's offices in Burbank, and lighting fixtures on the Vincent Thomas Bridge crossing the San Pedro Bay harbor.

"Historically, we were always worried about how much light falls onto the desk," Israel said. The discovery of light-related wellness problems like seasonal affective disorder – depression related to limited exposure to sunlight – caused a reassessment of this ideology to consider how much light should be hitting one's face, according to Israel.

Starting in the 1950s, windows came to be considered energy-inefficient because they easily let heat in or out of buildings, according to Israel. So, fluorescent lights were invented and windows in offices became smaller.



Molina Healthcare, a Fortune 500 company, provides an onsite gym at its Downtown Long Beach headquarters offices for exclusive use by its staff. The company encourages its employees to focus on their health and wellness both in and outside of the workplace. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

"We're finding out maybe we need a lot more light in these spaces. But it's kind of contradictory to our energy codes because they keep saying put in less and less electric light be-

cause we don't want to build new power plants," Israel said.

"There is a lot of talk about using LEDs that are now available. And you can mix the colors, and you can repli-

cate daylight," Israel said. "Which makes sense, because if you think about it, for tens of thousands of years we've pretty much lived outside."

(Please Continue To Page 30)

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Led by staff from Executive Fitness, Molina Healthcare employees take a break from work to exercise at their onsite gym. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

(Continued From Page 29)

Many of LDA's designs incorporate natural light. "My whole point is, why don't we just put in a window, put in a skylight? You know, let's do it using natural sources whenever possible," Israel said. Using natural lighting also saves energy, he noted.

LDA's own office has a variety of natural lighting solutions, including solar tubes and skylights equipped with light diffusers and mirrors to reflect light as the sun moves.

"Anything that we can do to perhaps reduce sick days . . . [and] to create a better environment for the people, that's really why we want to do this," Israel said. "And if we can make somebody 5% more productive, it pays for all of the lighting costs." He added, "Happier employees should make a more efficient company, plus you save energy. That's a win for everybody."

Creating Cultures Of Wellness In The Workplace

In addition to designing workplaces for wellness, some companies are creating wellness programs and providing fitness equipment at worksites, and even offer healthy food and on-site medical services to employees.

Long Beach-based Executive Fitness has operated a corporate well-

ness program for five years. The 20-year-old Long Beach fitness firm is operated by husband and wife Lisa and Casey Kammel.

"We started working with a local company and going into their offices and using conference rooms to teach group classes," Lisa Kammel recalled. "So literally it would be moving furniture, bringing in equipment that would be things like medicine balls and stretching bands, and really opening the eyes of these employees to things they could do with very little resources," she said.

Executive Fitness provides fitness services to Fortune 500 company Molina Healthcare. The fitness company manages an on-site gym at Molina Towers in Downtown Long Beach for Molina employees and three similar facilities at out-of-state offices. "That features group classrooms, a full gym with equipment with personal trainers on hand, and fitness professionals to run programming," Kammel said. "And it's a full facility exclusive to the employees of that company."

Molina Healthcare has invested in these fitness facilities and programs to encourage employees to be active. "The real goal is to try to get those employees to step away from the desk



Long Beach-based Executive Fitness staffs and oversees fitness programs for Molina Healthcare. Pictured at Molina Healthcare's onsite gym at Molina Towers are, from left, Executive Fitness Director of Operations Gema Barrios and co-owners Casey and Lisa Kammel. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

for a little bit and really allow a clearing of the mind," Kammel said. "And allowing your body to attain some of that little bit of a healthy break so you can be stronger and be more mentally focused." She noted that Molina also has its own internal wellness program for employees in addition to the fitness services her company provides.

One of the most common causes of health issues among office employees is being sedentary, according to Kammel. "You know, unfortunately, they're not necessarily getting up and taking breaks from their desk, and [they're]

spending too much time sitting," she explained. "Posture is a big concern."

Executive Fitness also works with other local small businesses, such as Dean Anthony Salon. "With respect to the people at Dean Anthony, those hairstylists are standing long hours on their feet," she said. "So I am teaching them stretching, range of motion, how they can hold their posture a little bit differently, endurance and strengthening their upper body. They're using those scissors all day long. We want those shoulders nice and strong."

MemorialCare Health System is

also focused on the health and wellness of its employees. “MemorialCare has been in the business of creating a culture of health and wellness overall for our employees for about 10 years,” Tammie Brailsford, COO and executive vice president of MemorialCare, said.

Brailsford said that the health system takes a “holistic approach” to employee health and wellness. “That takes the shape of being focused on many different things – physical activity being one of them, health and nutrition being another,” she said.

MemorialCare also offers employees assistance in managing chronic illnesses or conditions and “financial and spiritual well-being,” she noted.

“We have a gym on every campus and at our hospitals and at our corporate office. We provide yoga classes and the like at regular intervals throughout the day,” Brailsford said.

“We make standing desks and treadmill desks available for many of our employees,” Brailsford said.

Treadmill desks are precisely what they sound like – desks affixed to treadmills so employees can walk



Executive Fitness co-owner Casey Kammel shows a Molina Healthcare employee how to stretch in place at her standing desk. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

and work at the same time.

The health system also makes a point to provide healthy food in its cafeterias. The healthiest food items are the cheapest, and the least nutritional are the most expensive in order to incentivize healthier eating, Brailsford noted. The organization's Fountain Valley headquarters also features a health clinic staffed by a nurse practitioner,

which has reduced time off taken for illness-related issues, according to Brailsford.

MemorialCare provides health coaches to employees with chronic conditions. “We have seen tremendous reduction in blood pressure and in hemoglobin A1c, which is an indicator of diabetes, [as well as] weight loss and overall improvement in

health,” Brailsford said.

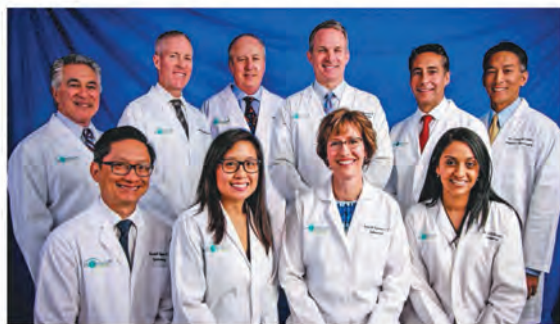
“We do an employee engagement survey every year with the help of the Gallup organization,” Brailsford said. “And a couple years ago we asked our employees whether our commitment to health and wellness and their well-being had helped them to live a healthier life. More than 86% of our employees responded affirmatively.” ■

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Nuts & Bolts Of Acid Reflux



By BHAVESH
B. SHAH, M.D.

Acid reflux is one of the most common gastrointestinal conditions with up to 20 percent of the western world experiencing it. It occurs when the contents of the stomach come back up (reflux) into the esophagus.

When stomach acid touches the lining of the esophagus, it can cause heartburn – a burning sensation in the middle of the chest, behind the breastbone or in the middle of the abdomen. Approximately six percent of people with acid reflux will experience significant heartburn.

When acid reflux and its associated symptoms continue for an extended period of time it's referred to as gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Acid reflux that is not well controlled can result in a reduced quality of life.

Research has shown that persistent reflux can lead to poor sleep and less physical functioning, including being less active, moving slower and sleeping in later.

The Reflux Experience

Acid reflux or GERD can come with a range of additional symptoms, which can vary for each individual.

- Regurgitation: Food coming back up. This could signify a more serious condition
- Nausea: Feeling sick to your stomach
- Lump in the throat
- Pain with swallowing: This may indicate a serious condition and should not be treated with over-the-counter medication
- Bloating
- Belching
- Chest pain: When chest pain is accompanied by pain in the back, neck, jaw or arms, it could indicate a heart condition
- Coughing: This can be disruptive, dry and persistent
- Early fullness: Feeling bloated half way through a meal
- Water brash: Sour taste in the back of the mouth

Treatment Options

Lifestyle Modification

The first step in controlling acid reflux is lifestyle modification. There are several strategies that have shown to reduce reflux symptoms.

- Losing weight for people who are overweight or obese.
- Reducing common food triggers, such as chocolate, coffee, peppermint, greasy or spicy foods, acidic foods like tomatoes, citrus and alcoholic drinks. In order to determine individual triggers, it's important to modify one aspect at a time.
- Avoiding late meals. Allow at least three hours to digest food before sleeping.
- Sleeping at an angle. In the absence of an adjustable bed, try raising the head of the bed using blocks.
- Quitting smoking.

Medications

While making lifestyle modifications, there are several prescription and over-the-counter medications available to help reduce symptoms.

- Antacids: Antacids help neutralize stomach acid. These are good for people with less persistent reflux. A doctor should be consulted if symptoms don't improve after consistent use of antacids.
- Histamine blockers (H2 blockers): H2 blockers provide short-term relief by decreasing acid production. These are recommended for mild symptoms.
- Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs): PPIs lower the amount of acid made in the stomach. PPIs are available by prescription and over-the-counter, however there are no differences in relief of symptoms between each type/brand of PPIs. If symptoms don't improve after several weeks of continued use, consult a physician.

The Burden of Reflux

Without lifestyle modification and treatment, GERD also can lead to serious complications, including inflammation in the esophagus, problems swallowing and an increased risk for esophageal cancer.

While reflux can seem overwhelming, it doesn't have to be. Take it one step at a time and start the conversation between you and your doctor.

(Bhavesh B. Shah, M.D., is medical director of interventional gastroenterology at Long Beach Memorial, and gastroenterology director at MemorialCare Todd Cancer Institute at Long Beach Memorial)

Upcoming Medical Events, Classes

March 14

Diabetes & You: Ask The Expert

Long Beach Memorial Medical Center is scheduled to host its quarterly class about living with diabetes. The class will feature a presentation on various diabetes-related topics and provide networking opportunities and support from others living with the disease.

Dr. Kyaw Moe, a nephrologist at Memorial, will lead the class, which is scheduled for Tuesday, March 14, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Miller Children's & Women's Hospital at 2801 Atlantic Ave. To RSVP, call 562/933-5043. Walk-ins are also welcome.

March 23

Heels For Hearts Art Auction & Mixer

Heels for Hearts is a fundraising group that supports the Long Beach Memorial Center for Women's Cardiac Health & Research. The group is scheduled to host a mixer Thursday, March 23, from 6-9 p.m. at The Reef at 880 South Harbor Scenic Dr.

Event attendees can participate in an art auction and learn about important heart issues facing women. Tickets, which include a complimentary drink and appetizers, cost \$25 before March 10 and \$30 after and can be purchased on eventbrite.com by searching "Project Heart – Heels for Hearts."

March 24

Katherine White, M.D.

Guest Lectureship On Childhood Anxiety

Donna Pincus, PhD, director of the Child and Adolescent Fear and Anxiety Treatment Program at Boston University, and psychologist Regalena "Reggie" Melroase, PhD, will be the keynote speakers at the 26th Annual Katherine White, M.D., Guest Lectureship. The event will focus on childhood anxiety. Light snacks and refreshments will be available. The event is scheduled for Friday, March 24, from 7:30-10:30 a.m. at Miller Children's & Women's Hospital at 2801 Atlantic Ave.

Donating Blood During March And Spin A Wheel For Two Free Tickets To The Laugh Factory

Long Beach Memorial and Miller Children's & Women's Hospital is encouraging residents to "donate blood and save a life." During March, the hospitals are offering blood donors an opportunity to win two free tickets to the Laugh Factory by spinning a prize wheel. To schedule an appointment, call the blood donor center at 562/933-0808. Must be 18 or older.

Beginning April 4

Freedom From Smoking

The American Lung Association is scheduled to host its free "Freedom from Smoking" program offered by MemorialCare Todd Cancer Institute at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center beginning Tuesday, April 4, at 5:30 p.m. According to a press release, the seven-week program includes eight group meetings and features "a step-by-step plan to help tobacco users gain control over their behavior and quit smoking."

The program includes the meetings, parking and a workbook. Participants must register for the program by Friday, March 31, by calling 800/MEMORIAL. Meetings are scheduled to take place at 2810 Long Beach Blvd. in the Todd Cancer Pavilion Group Room on the second floor.

May 13

Cycle To Raise Funds For Pediatric Cancer Research

Tour of Long Beach is hosting a cycling event to raise money for pediatric cancer research at the Jonathan Jaques Children's Cancer Center at Miller Children's & Women's Hospital. The event has four routes, including 30 miles, 62 miles, 100 miles and a free 5-mile Family Fun Ride. All routes end at the Finish Line Festival, which will include live entertainment, food trucks, a beer garden and more.

The event is scheduled for Saturday, May 13, and is set to begin at 6 a.m. at the intersection of Shoreline Drive and Linden Avenue. To register or donate, visit touroflongbeach.com. For more information, contact Kari Cho at 562/933-1670 or kcho@memorialcare.org. ■

Protecting Workers' Comp Independent Medical Review

■ By **HEATHER WALLACE**

Associate General Council, CalChamber

Oral arguments have been set in a workers' compensation case that deals with the constitutionality of the independent medical reviews (IMR) that were part of the cost-saving reforms of 2012.

The oral arguments in the case of *Ramirez v. Workers' Compensation Appeals Board (WCAB), et al.*, will be presented on March 20 in the Third Appellate District Court.

The California Chamber of Commerce filed a friend-of-the-court brief, arguing that the Legislature must be allowed to exercise its constitutionally granted powers to address the ever-increasing burdens on California's workers' compensation system by ensuring that medical necessity decisions are consistent, and made by medical professionals. The brief was prepared for the CalChamber by Ted Penny of Haight Brown & Bonesteel.

The CalChamber brief argues that as part of the difficult responsibility of de-

signing and promulgating the state workers' compensation system, the California Legislature must balance the medical needs of injured employees against the ever-increasing costs imposed on the system and on the employers responsible for ensuring that injured employees are provided with necessary medical treatment.

The Legislature designed the IMR process to increase efficiency for treatment disputes and to ensure physicians, not judges, make medical decisions.

The petitioner in this case argues the opposite, that instead, a judge must determine whether treatment is medically necessary, and that the IMR process denies the petitioner his right of due process.

Does Not Violate Due Process

The CalChamber brief points out that the petitioner's dissatisfaction with the Legislature's exercise of its constitutionally granted power, set forth in Section 4 of Article XIV of the California Constitution, falls short of showing that he is deprived of due process.

The first step in an IMR begins when an employee's treating physician makes a treatment recommendation. The recommendation is submitted to the employer's utilization review process for a determination of whether to approve, modify, delay, or deny the recommended treatment. A medical director designated by the employer or insurer reviews all information that is "reasonably necessary" to make the determination. The medical di-

rector's decision shall be consistent with the medical treatment utilization schedules adopted pursuant to Labor Code Section 5307.27 (f)(2). Therefore, the IMR process does not come into play until the utilization review makes a factual determination about whether the recommended treatment is medically appropriate.

This process means IMR is itself an appeal, the brief points out. IMR constitutes a second level of fact-finding and medical record review to answer the limited question of whether a particular course of treatment is medically appropriate. The IMR physician therefore resolves the dispute between the employer's utilization review and the employee's treating physician.

Other Arguments Refuted

The petitioner also argued that the workers' compensation law as outlined in Labor Code Section 4610.6 deprived him of substantial justice and violated the separation of powers clause of the California Constitution.

The CalChamber brief refuted both arguments, pointing out that the workers' compensation law is aimed toward achieving substantial justice expeditiously, inexpensively, and without encumbrance.

Although the Legislature may have previously provided for a different method and manner of reviewing medical decisions, this fact does not deem that method to be the only one that is constitutionally acceptable. Section 4 unambiguously provides the Legislature with the power to

fix, control, and undoubtedly, to limit the manner of review of decisions rendered by the tribunal or tribunals designated by it, the CalChamber explains in the brief.

The CalChamber continues that such a policy decision was the Legislature's to make in light of the demands on California's workers' compensation system, and in an effort to avoid the encumbrance of time-consuming procedures that lead to potentially unfair, inconsistent, and non-scientifically based medical decisions.

Although the petitioner and, admittedly, the WCAB, may disagree with the effect that Section 4610.6 has on the WCAB's power to change conclusions related to medical necessity, such was the effect expressly intended by the Legislature in enacting that section. The Legislature sought to put all such decisions on what is necessary medical treatment in the hands of medical professionals "to ensure that treatment decisions are consistent and based on the highest standards of evidence-based medicine," the brief states.

In arguing that the workers' compensation law violates the separation of powers clause, the petition wrongly assumed that the law precludes any judicial review of an IMR decision. In fact, the law provides five ways in which an applicant may appeal an IMR decision, the CalChamber brief explains.

Next Step

The court has 90 days to issue its ruling following the March 20 oral arguments. ■

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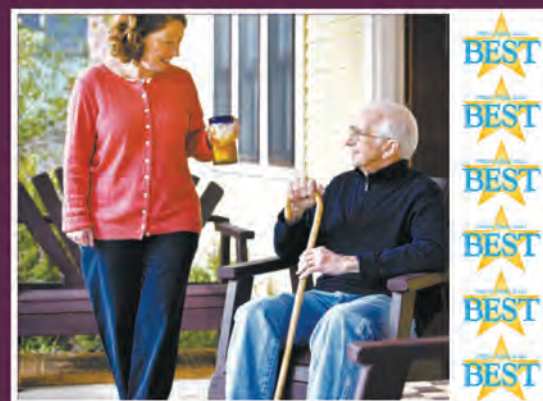
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LBCC Acting President Gabel Talks Priorities And The Search For A Replacement

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
Senior Writer

In her two months serving as acting superintendent-president of Long Beach City College (LBCC), Ann-Marie Gabel has been continuing the work of her predecessor through the implementation of the school's recently adopted strategic plan.

In July of last year, it was announced that then-president Eloy Ortiz Oakley was named chancellor of the California Community Colleges' 113-school system. Gabel assumed her role as acting president in December while the search for a permanent replacement began.

"I was really more honored and looked at it as a privilege that the board had enough confidence in me to be the acting superintendent-president," Gabel said. "I really deem it as an honor, and I'm really enjoying it."

Gabel earned a bachelor's degree in business administration with an emphasis in accounting from California State University, Fullerton and a master's degree in educational management from University of La Verne. After college, Gabel spent seven years as a CPA auditing K-12 schools and community college districts. From there, she spent seven years as the manager of fiscal affairs for the North Orange County Community College District and two years as the associate vice chancellor of fiscal affairs for the Rancho Santiago Community College District.

In 2007, Gabel accepted the position of vice president of administrative services at LBCC, a position she held for nine and a half years before taking over as acting president. Once a new president is hired, Gabel said she will resume the duties of her previous position, which included most business aspects such as the budget, payroll and the construction program.



Photograph of Ann-Marie Gabel by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan

Gabel said her first priority upon assuming her new role was to the further advancement and implementation of the school's strategic plan, which was rolled out last fall. To do this, she has been overseeing the application process for grants and awards to help fund various programs.

"We just received notification that the state intends to award \$750,000 to us for a Promise Innovation award to help us continue with our Promise Pathways program," Gabel said. "There were only 14 colleges in the state that received an award. So I'm pretty proud of that."

Additionally, Gabel said the administration is working on several innovation awards to receive grant funding geared toward the school's guided pathways initiatives. She explained that applying for these grants is important to offset costs and jumpstart the guided pathways portion of the strategic plan.

"When we say guided pathways, what we want to do is . . . [create] so-called roadmaps for students," Gabel said. "Starting in high school and going all the way through the Cal State Long Beach, what are the courses you need to take in order to get the instruction and degrees for your career of choice. It will just make it a little bit easier for students to determine what classes they need to take in order to meet their educational goal."

The reason for these pathways, according to Gabel, is that community college students are taking longer to complete what used to be a two-year degree. According to a 2014 report by Campaign for College Opportunity, some students are taking more than four years to earn their associate's degree.

Gabel said she will also be sitting in on the final interviews for new faculty members, something she never did in her previous position. She explained that faculty are an investment because they often spend an entire career at the school and that it's an important decision for an acting president to be a part of.

"I'm learning different aspects of the college. I think it's just looking at things through a different lens. I'm enjoying that," Gabel said. "I'm having more interactions with students, which is refreshing."

While Gabel continues her work as acting president, the search for a permanent president continues. There were 31 applicants for the position, which were whittled down to nine candidates for the first-round interviews; however, one person dropped out.

Of the eight candidates, the LBCC Board of Trustees chose the following five finalists: Tod A. Burnett, Ed.D., president of Saddleback College; Otto W.K. Lee, Ed.D., president of Los Angeles Harbor College; Marvin Martinez, president of East Los

Angeles College; Melinda Nish, Ed.D., executive advisor to the president at the College of the Marshall Islands; and Reagan F. Romali, Ph.D., President of Harry S Truman, one of the City Colleges of Chicago.

A campus forum to introduce the finalists and have them meet face to face with faculty, staff and students, was scheduled to be held yesterday, Monday, February 27. Those in attendance were to be provided evaluation forms to write comments about the finalists. Those forms will be given to the trustees to help in their decision.

The board will deliberate in closed session today, February 28, after its regularly scheduled meeting. However, Gabel said she does not anticipate they will report out at that time and may require a special meeting. A final decision is expected in late March or early April after all negotiations are finalized, with the expectation that the new president will take over on July 1, according to Gabel.

"I think [the new president] needs to understand community colleges, specifically California community colleges," Gabel said. "A good communicator, a good listener. Someone who truly values the mission of community colleges."

She said lessening the time students spend in community college by continuing the implementation of the strategic plan should be the top priority of the new president, as it is hers. However, until the new president takes the reigns, Gabel said she will continue to work in the best interest of school.

"I hope it makes me a stronger vice president when I go back, and I think it will," Gabel said. "Having other friends throughout the state who have held my position and have done the acting superintendent-president [job], they've expressed that it does make you stronger because you do have a little bit different perspective." ■

Educators Respond To Confirmation Of Betsy DeVos As Secretary Of Education

The Long Beach Business Journal asked several local educators: How do you think having Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education will impact your educational institution? Responding were: California State University Chancellor Timothy White; Long Beach City College Acting President-Superintendent Ann-Marie Gabel; Westerly School Head of School Patrick Brown; and Universal Technical Institute's Long Beach Campus President Larry Hohl. The Business Journal did not hear back from the Teachers Association of Long Beach.

CSU Chancellor Timothy White: "As the largest and most diverse public university system in the United States, the California State University looks forward to informing the current administration and congress on the mission, vision and values of this institution, while joining with our higher education partners in California and nationally in advocating for our students and university communities."

We look forward to finding common ground and new opportunities to achieve many of our bipartisan goals, including the reinstatement of year-round Pell grants. Indeed, the CSU firmly believes that we can achieve great things when united under a shared spirit and common goal. Our 475,000 students, 47,000 faculty and staff and 3.3 million alumni prove this correct every day.

As we work to provide all students with access to high-quality, consequential higher education and a lifetime of success, the CSU will always stand committed to its founding mission and core values of opportunity, diversity and quality. We look forward to finding solutions and success for public higher education in the years ahead."

LBCC Acting Superintendent-President Ann-Marie Gabel: "We were encouraged by Secretary DeVos' comments at the Association of Community College Trustees conference last week, where she voiced support for the mission and value of community colleges. LBCC is hopeful that she will be supportive, as the previous administration was, of free community college and other reforms that would make higher education more accessible and affordable for millions of Americans. We will seek opportunities to brief Secretary DeVos and her staff on the success of the Long Beach College Promise, as we have done with other educational leaders throughout California and the nation."



Westerly School Head of School Patrick Brown "It is unclear whether Betsy DeVos has the background knowledge, temperament, and connections to public education officials to be successful serving the entire spectrum of educational delivery systems in our country. Clearly, she has a strong connection and understanding of public school alternatives such as charter schools, and is an advocate for school choice and voucher systems. Choice is one reason non-profit independent schools like Westerly exists in Long Beach. Long Beach Unified is also an advocate for Choice for families when it comes to their children's education. Choice alone as demonstrated by underperforming Charter schools does not guarantee a strong school."

I believe the Secretary's role should be to strengthen all educational platforms, so all students in America can receive high quality whole-child education. Every family should be informed about their education options to find the right environment for their children. We hope under the new Secretary, she will promote informed decision making and a better partnership between family and schools."

UTI Campus President, Long Beach Larry Hohl "At Universal Technical Institute (UTI), we believe that there are many pathways to career success. While time will tell how having Betsy DeVos as U.S. Secretary of Education will impact our campuses, we do know one thing: Now is the time to change the way we think about education."

It's important that parents acknowledge and embrace when kids are inclined toward a non-traditional path. Today, a focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is critical because the available jobs in STEM-based occupations such as computer science, engineering, advanced manufacturing, and automotive and diesel technicians across the U.S. far outpace the number of qualified candidates to fill them. This leaves many employers unable to find the quality workforce they need, a situation that ultimately affects the Long Beach economy and beyond.

U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos supports STEM curriculum, strong student outcomes, proven best practices and educational choice – and that is encouraging.

At UTI, we embrace this new leadership as an opportunity to show how our strong industry partnerships with automotive, diesel, and collision employers help shape our student outcomes and STEM-based curriculum. This model, and our commitment to excellence, is credited with helping 88 percent of our students land an industry job within one year of graduating.

Our model aligns with Secretary DeVos' emphasis to ensure each student is prepared for an in-demand, rewarding and well-paying career, and we look forward to working with the new administration." ■

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Pacific Coast University Of Law Celebrates 90 Years

Historic Local School Continues Tradition Of Affordable Education

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
Assistant Editor

That Long Beach has a law school comes as a surprise to many locals. Located on the third floor of an office building just outside the Traffic Circle, perhaps it's no wonder that the 90-year-old Pacific Coast University of Law flies under the radar. But its storied history, notable alumni, diverse student body and dedication to affordability tell a story of a university with staying power — a story Dean of Students Maren Carmona hopes will become increasingly known within the Long Beach community.

Pacific Coast University was founded in Los Angeles in 1927 as a collection of schools in business, architecture, divinity and law. During the Great Depression, all but the law school shut down, according to Carmona. “The law school survived, and it moved to Long Beach,” she said.

The law school's founding dean, Carl Manson, kept the school going through another tumultuous period: World War II. “Dean Manson kept the school going, and he ran it out of his garage during World War II,” Carmona recounted. “He taught all of the classes.” Manson remained dean for 40 years. Irving Schleimer, a member of the faculty, became dean in 1981. He was succeeded by Dean William Lewis.

Dean Andrea Lua (who is Carmona's sister) now leads the university, along with Dean of Academic Standards Sherry Diamond and Carmona.

PCU has always operated as a night school and for much of its history rented out space at Wilson High School after hours, according to Carmona. In 2000, the school's board made the decision to acquire a library and establish its own facility in order to take steps to become accredited. “All those changes were made and the school grew, and we acquired accreditation in 2012,” Carmona said.

Previous deans had not pursued accreditation. Schleimer, for example, was “a feisty man,” Carmona, who studied at PCU under Schleimer, recalled. “He wanted to stay unaccredited. He liked the freedom of doing whatever we wanted and the ‘stick it to the man’ type of thing.”

There have been debates among the California legal community over the years about whether to allow unaccredited law schools to operate, so when Lewis took over operation of the university, accreditation seemed like the prudent step to take, Carmona recounted.

Pacific Coast University of Law has always operated as a nonprofit. In part because of its financial structure and in part because of the school's mission, it has remained affordable. “Our mission statement is that we are to provide a quality legal education at an affordable price,” Carmona said.

“We are, of the California Bar examiner schools, the cheapest statewide,” she said.



Maren Carmona is dean of students at Pacific Coast University Law School. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan)

Funding for the school comes in the form of student tuition, which is collected on a pay-as-you-go basis, according to Carmona. Funding primarily pays for staff and instructors' salaries, as well as rent for the facility.

“We have a prudent reserve which is enough to perform what we would call a teach-out if something were to happen and the school were to close. We would have to finish graduating all of our students,” Carmona said. “We never anticipate that happening, but that is at least the prudent amount that any school should maintain.”

Due to its affordability and night-class scheduling, PCU is what Carmona calls an “opportunity law school,” meaning that it is accessible to underserved communities. Most, if not all, PCU students have full-time employment. Many also have families, Carmona noted.

Carmona was one such PCU student. She had planned to pursue a dual master's degree in history and library sciences, but chose to enroll at PCU when her husband, a longshore worker, was seriously injured on the job. “His career possibilities didn't look like they would be that great,” she said. The same day Carmona started school at PCU, her daughter had her first day of kindergarten class.

After graduating, Carmona eventually took a position as an instructor at the school. She later took a position on the board before taking on her role as a dean.

“We probably have the most diverse student body of any law school in the country. Last year one of our graduates was 81, and we had another graduate in her early 20s,” Carmona noted. Since it was founded, a large share of the law school's student body has been women. “I believe currently our student population is more than half women,” she said.

The first female California Superior Court Judge, Kathleen Parker, was a graduate of PCU, as was one of the first African-American court judges in Southern California, William Ross, according to Carmona.

PCU's students come from throughout Southern California because of the university's affordability and its location central to Los Angeles and Orange County. “We are probably the best situated of the California bar examiner schools because we are right in the center,” Carmona said.

The university's staff of 25 faculty members includes new and established attorneys, a commissioner in a superior court, an administrative law judge, injury attorneys, public defenders and more.

PCU's program prepares students to pass the bar and enter any field of law with the exception of patent law, which requires additional training. Many graduates work in service fields of law such as workers' comp, but a fair share also work in public defenders' offices, Carmona said.

Classes at PCU are small. Its largest graduating class consisted of 52 people, Carmona estimated. “That was the second class that entered after the Great Recession [2007],” she said. There are two tracks per class year, so classroom sizes are small, she noted.

Following the recession, the university experienced a surge of small business owners enrolling at the school. “What we witnessed the year after 2009 [was that] a large number of our applicants were small business people who were fearful that their business and income might dry up,” Carmona said. These individuals felt that becoming lawyers would provide job stability, she explained.

“The past year or two we have seen our application pool shrink a bit, but it's more in line with what we traditionally received, which is people all over the spectrum,” Carmona said.

While bar passage rates among PCU graduates fluctuates, the last administration of the bar exam was disappointing, according to Carmona. This is not uncommon, however. For the past three years running, fewer than half of those who took the California Bar Exam passed it, according to abovethelaw.com. Last year, 43% passed, which was a 32-year low.

“Our students don't always pass the California bar exam on the first try for a number of reasons. The single most reason is that they generally don't have time before

the first time they take it to adequately study,” Carmona explained. This is because PCU students typically work full time and have families, so they cannot afford to take time off from their busy lives to study adequately right after finishing law school. “We have implemented a number of programs to help our students try to get the tools to pass from here on out,” she added.

“My top priority is to make sure that students are getting a quality education and that anything that might be impeding them, be it personal or institutional, is addressed in the proper manner,” Carmona said.

“Right now, our greatest plan is to make sure that our educational program is the best that it can be and that our graduates are prepared to go pass the bar and enter the legal profession,” she explained. Eventually, she hopes the school obtains its own building or structure, but she said PCU would stay at 1650 Ximeno Ave., Suite 300, for at least another five years.

“It's amazing that we managed to reach 90 years and produce attorneys that are wildly successful and do amazing things. And that we still remain the best kept secret in Long Beach,” Carmona said.

Pacific Coast University of Law is holding a formal gala on May 6 to celebrate its 90th anniversary, raise funds for scholarships and honor local graduates. City Attorney Charles Parkin will receive an award named for William Ross, while City Auditor Laura Doud will receive an award named for Kathleen Parker. Mayor Robert Garcia will be awarded an honorary juris doctorate degree for his commitment to education in the City of Long Beach. ■



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Roxanne's Cocktail Lounge & Latin Grill

Roxanne's Cocktail Lounge & Latin Grill first opened at 1115 E. Wardlow Rd. six years ago when the Molina family – who had previously tried other business ventures – decided they wanted to create Long Beach's next go-to hang out. The concept was centered on a passion for cocktails, according to co-owner Roberto Molina. "It's a complete passion and art, just like food," he said of cocktail making. Roxanne's menu is influenced by the family's roots in Central America, Molina said. "For example, we have our really popular famous wings are the tamarindo wings," he said. The menu also features other small plates like sliders and empanadas. "We also made it so we are a night life spot. . . . We have an entertainment license and a dancing license as well," Molina said. A secret door inside Roxanne's leads to a hidden bar called The Exhibition Room – a venture the Molina's started to appeal to clientele entrenched in the spirits scene of Long Beach. The Exhibit Room also serves as a mini museum to Long Beach bar history. Last year, Roxanne's began operating a "bar on wheels" at events around the city. Molina also hopes to soon open another concept within Roxanne's.

The Molina family, pictured from left: Chris, Roberto, Mirna and Robert.

L.B. Walker Automotive

The auto repair industry is in Sal Lombardi's blood. In 1978, at the age of 14, he moved with his family from Montreal, Canada, to Southern California, where his father owned a 76 gas station in Long Beach until 1992. Following a string of jobs and several moves, Lombardi was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. After several rounds of chemotherapy, Lombardi found himself in remission and reinvigorated by the auto repair industry, which ultimately led him to opening L.B. Walker Automotive at 1000 E. Wardlow Rd. in Long Beach at the beginning of 2015. "This area is really very quiet, great people. It's friendly, never an issue with any customers," Lombardi said. "It feels like when we were in business at the 76 station. People have that trust with you. It's great. I just love it." The shop has four employees, including Lombardi, and offers a range of services from car restorations to oil changes. Lombardi prides himself on customer service but said it's not the only thing that sets his location apart from others. "[We offer a] clean shop and good, honest repairs. Customers tell us our work is done right the first time and that they feel at home each time they come here," Lombardi said. "I love that. That's why we have a good customer base."



Lakeview Lock Shope

Solomon Barnes started Lakeview Lock Shop at 913 E. Wardlow Rd. in 2000, and spread the word by canvassing the neighborhood with a backpack full of flyers. Now, after 17 years in business, he is well known in the community. "I know most everybody in the neighborhood and everywhere I go, somebody knows me in Long Beach," Barnes said. "It's like a home away from home," he reflected. "I am part of the community now, I have been around here so long." Barnes previously worked in the employee assistance program at McDonnell Douglas. He stumbled into the locksmith trade by happenstance when he went to get a key made and formed a connection with the owner, whom he helped join a substance abuse program. Barnes took a liking to the locksmith field and interned with the business. "Then McDonnell Douglas sold to Boeing and they said I had to have a degree for that position I had, so I said, 'I might as well open me a shop,'" he recalled. "Business has been good to me," Barnes said. Barnes has been good to the community, too. He is well known in the community for his charitable work distributing toys at Christmastime, as well as his work with substance abuse programs, he said.



Chiropractic Neurology Center

Chiropractic Neurology Center (CNC) opened the doors to its new digs at 1225 E. Wardlow Rd. in January after moving from their previous location in Bixby Knolls. Married couple Dr. Shad Groves and Dr. Karin Kim first opened their business in 2000 after moving from the Bay Area. Both are chiropractors, with Groves specializing in chiropractic neurology and Kim in family health and overall wellness. The two moved to Long Beach in 2000 after Groves, an Army veteran, finished his education. "We didn't know anything about Long Beach when we moved here," Groves recalled, noting that the two considered locations all over Southern California. "I ended up choosing the Long Beach office. . . . And it was very low rent and right off the freeway," he recalled. The two also loved the "big city, small town" vibe Long Beach is known for. "For the first couple of years in practice we had to advertise because nobody knew us," Groves said. "We had to go out to the public and meet them. . . . Now we have a small enough reputation where we just generate referrals." In addition to offering chiropractic services, CNC employs two massage therapists and an acupuncturist also rents space within the office. Groves is often referred unique neurological cases due to his specialty.

Small Business Showcase – Wardlow Road West Of LB Airport

Articles by Assistant Editor Samantha Mehlinger
and Senior Writer Brandon Richardson.
Photographs by the Business Journal's Larry Duncan

This edition of Small Business Showcase focuses on businesses located on Wardlow Road from Cherry Avenue on the east, past the historic California Heights neighborhood – where homes were first built in the 1920s – and the southern edges of Bixby Knolls. The street includes professional service businesses, medical offices, small retailers, restaurants and bars, coffee houses and auto repair firms, nearly all of which are in one- and two-story buildings.

Support Local Small Businesses

Choice Medical Supplies

Charles Ume established Choice Medical Supplies, a full-service durable medical equipment company, in Inglewood in 2001. In June 2005, he relocated the business to 800 E. Wardlow Rd. in Long Beach. “[We moved because] Long Beach is a much better business environment and also because Long Beach was the center of our insurance and patient population,” Ume said. “It’s been terrific because we’ve grown year after year, and Long Beach makes it a lot easier for us to do business because of the access to the freeways.” The store sells medical supplies, big and small, from hospital beds to catheters. Doctors refer patients to Choice Medical when they are discharged and need supplies for their homes and everyday living. Mobility needs are common, according to Ume, who said the store carries all types of wheelchairs and can even customize them. Many of the store’s clients are referred by doctors at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center and through Seaside Health Plan. St. Mary Medical Center has also recently begun referring more patients, according to Ume. “We’re really excited about the work we do. We have a lot of phenomenal doctors in Long Beach that trust us to take care of their patients,” Ume said. “We are looking to stay in Long Beach and do a lot more and grow.”

Pictured from left: Ricardo Angulo, patient services coordinator (PSC); Margarita Melchor, biller; Emanuel Sanchez, PSC; Colin Mativo, vice president and chief operating officer; Gilbert Aquino, PSC; Kevin Ortiz, technician; and Bing Parungao, lead and government services.



Mac's Barbershop

After being laid off from his job at McDonnell Douglas, Mac McCormack decided to become a barber. “An old friend of mine was barbering, and he had a shop in Orange, Jake’s Barbershop,” McCormack said. “I liked what he was doing, so I ended up going to school and got my license.” In 1996, McCormack began cutting hair at Cameron’s Barbershop in Long Beach’s California Heights neighborhood. The next year, he found a space for lease around the corner at 915 E. Wardlow Rd. and decided to open up his own shop. Mac’s Barbershop opened on January 5, 1998. McCormack is the only person who works at the one-chair shop, which he said has customers from all walks of life. He explained that he’s had a consistent clientele, losing some when companies such as Boeing or Toyota moved operations but gaining new clients throughout the years. “I love the area. It’s great. Back when I worked at the other barbershop and was looking for a place, it had that old-time feeling of a small community, like Mayberry,” McCormack said. “I love what I do. I love the customers that come in. I appreciate past and present customers that have supported Mac’s Barbershop.”



Small Business Dollars & Sense

Tips For Being In Business With A Loved One



By BEN
ALVARADO

Owning a small business with your spouse is both challenging and rewarding. While running a small business in itself is no small feat, adding a partnership to the equation brings another layer of complexity. Work spills into family time and roles can become blurred. With proper planning, challenges can turn to successes. To help ensure your professional partnership is as successful as your romantic one, here are three considerations:

Know before you go

Ignorance is never bliss. It’s important to understand, and be comfortable with where your partner stands financially, so there aren’t any surprises when it comes time to obtain business financing. Does your partner have a strong credit profile? Do they carry any debt? How do they feel about utilizing credit to start, run and grow the business? These are all important questions to ask each other early on. There are many free online tools to help explore financing including Wells Fargo Works for Small Business.

Define roles and responsibilities

It’s important to define roles and responsibilities in every business partnership, particularly for couples who operate a business together. The old adage “opposites attract” can often mean that each person brings a unique set of skills and strengths to a relationship, something

that should be harnessed in a business partnership. As you’re developing your business plan, take time to identify your respective strengths and passions, and divvy up the business operations from there. Make sure to clearly outline and document the agreed-upon company structure, responsibilities for each role and each individual’s ownership stake.

Commit to regularly revisiting your business plan to ensure the structure is still working, and adjust roles as needed. A well-thought-out, updated business plan will help keep business owners focused on company goals and objectives, and track their progress.

Put in place a suitable exit strategy

One area of business operations that is frequently overlooked is the exit strategy. Winding down is a crucial stage of the business lifecycle and something that should be addressed from inception. This is especially true when owning a business with your loved one, as emotions can sometimes get in the way of tough business decisions. Included in your business plan, this strategy should outline what will happen if one partner decides to leave the business to pursue other opportunities, or there is a need to close the business for other reasons. A financial advisor or tax advisor is a great resource to help establish a plan that works for you.

One final tip for couples in business together is to take time for each other outside of the business. Most small business owners will tell you that the line between work and home is fuzzy, and this applies even more to couples who work together. Try to keep business conversations to business hours, and carve out time away from work to do things that you love.

Many couples who have found success will tell you that the benefits of being in business together are worth it. By laying the proper foundation in the beginning, owning a business with your loved one can be an incredibly rewarding experience.

(Ben Alvarado, a 26-year veteran of Wells Fargo, is the president of the bank’s So. Calif. Region, which stretches from Long Beach to Orange, Imperial and San Diego counties.)

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