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FOCUS ON THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM INDUSTRY

With Debut Of Flashy Fountains, Convention Center Improvements Come Full Circle – So What's Next?

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

The debut of the new Terrace Theater plaza fountains in mid-May represented the culmination of a master plan to

transform the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center's underutilized venues into turnkey event spaces that are not only contemporary, functional and visually unique, but that also offer a cost savings to clients.

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Charlie Beirne, left, general manager of the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, and Steve Goodling, president and CEO of the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, have collaborated over the past several years to position Long Beach as one of the top destination cities in the country. (Photograph by Matt Fukushima)

Entrepreneur Howard Takes Reins Of Chamber Board

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

John Howard, a former U.S. Air Force pilot and owner of the Chick-fil-A franchise at the Long Beach Towne Center for the past 12 years, was installed as chair of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce on

June 13, replacing outgoing chair Kent Peterson of P2S Engineering.

Howard is a native of Compton, where he was raised by a single-mother and kindergarten teacher with a passion for education that she was determined to instill in her son. He recalled that she would come home from work when he was a toddler and teach him

the same lessons she taught to her five-year-old students. She sacrificed to put him through private schools, including the Southern California Military Academy and Brethren Christian Junior & Senior High School. Howard and his mother moved to Long Beach when he was about 13.

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More Hotel Investment On The Way

Hundreds Of Millions Of Dollars To Be Pumped Into Long Beach Market

By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

Hundreds of millions of dollars are being invested in new hotel developments in Long Beach, with the downtown area alone to see the introduction of nearly 1,000 new hotel rooms over the next several

(Please Continue To Page 26)

Community Hospital

MemorialCare, City At Odds Over Transition; Molinas Enter Picture

By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

The Long Beach City Council is slated to consider a new operator for Community Hospital tonight, June 19: Molina, Wu, Network (MWN), LLC. City staff will ask the council to allow them to pursue exclusive negotiations with the health care group.

John Bishop, CEO of Community and

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MILLENNIAL PULSE

Stop Asking Me If I Hate Men, Or, 'Feminism For Millennials'

By Editor Samantha Mehlinger

You would think that in the era of the #MeToo movement and women's marches when women are proudly going about their every day lives with phrases like "Nasty Woman" and "Nevertheless

She Persisted" and even the visage of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg emblazoned across their chests, that I would not have found myself in this situation yet

(Please Continue To Page 5)

PortSide Keeping Up With The Port Of Long Beach

Jamilla Vollmann, a deputy project manager on the Long Beach Civic Center project, was first attracted to the city because of the many developments taking place. “I wanted to participate in the city’s urban design,” she said. After starting her career in the bay area, she moved to Long Beach about 15 years ago to work as a city planner. Vollmann then became a project manager for the city’s former redevelopment agency, where she had the opportunity to collaborate on the Gov. George Deukmejian Courthouse and the City of Long Beach Downtown Plan, an outline for the design guidelines and development standards for the area. “It’s exciting to see the planning stages of what I did earlier with the city come to fruition,” she said. Vollmann became an employee of the Port of Long Beach Harbor Department, a department of the city, almost six years ago. She described the civic center, which will house the new port headquarters, as a “once in a lifetime project.” Her responsibilities include designing and reviewing the plans for the site. “Each day is very different,” Vollmann explained. “I’m in meetings most of the week with our own team at the port, as well as with the architects and contractors for the project onsite at the construction trailers. We coordinate many items with the city.” Vollmann said the project is on track for completion next summer. “I’ve always been a big fan of design and seeing a project grow from a concept all the way to construction,” she commented.

– Article and Photograph by Staff Writer Anne Artley



Foundation For The Long Beach Symphony Names First Executive Director

– The Foundation for the Long Beach Symphony has named Genevieve Macias to serve as its first executive director. Macias has served as the director of development and communications for the Long Beach Symphony since 2013, and will now also lead the nonprofit corporation that serves as the organization’s endowment fund. The foundation was created in 1986 and has since been overseen by a board of directors. Macias’s goal is to triple the endowment fund over the next few years.

Arts Council For Long Beach Appoints New Director Of Programs

– The Arts Council for Long Beach announced the appointment of Lisa Desmidt as its new director of programs. Her responsibilities include overseeing the grants, marketing and arts education programs, as well as managing the organization’s website. Desmidt has served as the arts council’s grants and marketing manager for three years.

Belmont Heights Community Association Welcomes New Boardmembers

– The Belmont Heights Community Association has welcomed two new boardmembers, residents Derrick Muska and Scott Gallic. Muska is a real estate agent with Muska Homes at Main Street Realtors. He plans to promote family-friendly events and the association’s outreach program. Gallic is an environmental program manager with Cumming Corporation. He is serving as the organization’s treasurer, and looks forward to exploring sustainability-focused community projects. ■

Long Beach’s Cabe Toyota Honored With Toyota Motor North America President’s Award

Cabe Toyota, located at 2895 Long Beach Blvd., was recently honored with the annual President’s Award from Toyota Motor North America, Inc. This award recognizes American Toyota dealerships that exceed the company’s quotas for vehicle and parts sales, as well as for earning a high level of customer satisfaction. John Cabe, Cabe Toyota’s general manager and dealer principal, said his location has won the award five times in the last six years. Cabe described the dealership as a family store with many repeat customers. “We’re a smaller dealer. Our employees have been here a long time like our parts and service managers. We’ve got guys who’ve been here for 40 years,” he said. “Over the years, we just take care of our customers. That’s our deal.” Cabe’s father and uncle, identical twins, started the dealership in 1966. “I was born a few blocks from the dealership,” Cabe remarked. “I haven’t gone very far.” Cabe has served as general manager since the 1980s. “Toyota has been a good partner,” Cabe commented. “They treat their dealers really well, they support us and they make a great car.” Cabe is pictured in front of a 2018 Toyota Camry, one of the dealership’s bestsellers. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Anne Artley)

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(Continued From Page 1)

again: explaining to another Millennial what “feminism” is.

I could not tell if, as he blasély half-asked/half-stated, “Doesn’t that really just mean you hate men,” while he consumed a giant medium rare burger and a 20-ounce india pale ale, if he was entirely serious.

As I looked back at him over my medium well burger (because I don’t like it to look half-dead, thank you very much) and my pink glass of rosé, I said, “No. That’s a myth perpetuated by the patriarchy.” I could see the gears start to turn as he now wondered whether I was entirely serious.

And I think in both cases the truth was somewhere in the middle.

I’ve had similar conversations start in many ways, often on dates. Sometimes they begin by asking: are men allowed to open doors for women and pay for the date, or will this cause the woman to erupt in a fit of rage? Once, the conversation began after a man in his early 30s asked me why women “can’t just let men take care of them anymore.”

Needless to say, my eye-rolling capabilities are now so well practiced that they are second to none.

Although I have had these interactions with both men and women my age, about 99% of them have been with men. They’ve occurred over many years, well before the #MeToo movement and well after multiple “waves” of feminism, all of which I confess rather blur together for me.

Like many women, I think, feminism was not something that occurred consciously to me, at first.

It slowly crept up on me after years of having my behind grabbed in all manner of places – from my high school hallway, to the dive bar down the street from my university, to in my own home by a friend who meant no harm and didn’t understand where the line was because, well, no one ever made him adhere to one.

It slowly crept up on me when in college, as a member of a sorority that annually planned Take Back The Night (an event that remembers sexual assault victims and gives them a platform to speak) each year I saw more and more women I knew speak up about their own experiences and began to realize that all the alarming statistics they tell you on the news and in college orientations are true.

It slowly crept up on me in some classrooms, where more men were called upon than women. It crept up on me when I kicked a man out of a friend’s dorm when she was clearly incapacitated, and he was not. It crept up on me when, getting drinks for a friend’s 21st, a much larger man put his arm around her shoulders and refused to step back until I threatened to make “a scene.”

These are the moments that come to mind when someone my age says to me, “Doesn’t that just mean you hate men,” and I am frozen by the flood of memories, wondering: how do you begin to explain feminism to someone who doesn’t have the experiences to know why it’s necessary?

What do you tell them? Is it about the wage gap? Is it about sexual harassment? Is it about freeing the nipple? Burning bras? Or the great divider of red and blue: abortion?

Like any philosophy, feminism can get sticky and complicated if you go too far down the theoretical rabbit hole. But I’m not expecting anybody to do that. And I think your average guy or gal wearing a “feminist” shirt doesn’t either.

The basic issue behind feminism is this: sexism still exists. And unless you have been living under a particularly dense rock, you should know this. You should know this because millions of women across the world are annually marching through the streets to remind us. You should know based upon the millions of tweets marked #MeToo. Women aren’t doing those things just for kicks.

Feminism in its most basic form or essence is the belief that the genders should be equal. This means all genders, including those that fall within nonconforming lines.

It means, for example, that if a man were doing the same exact job as me at the same skill level, that we should be making the same amount of money. But study after study shows that in such cases, women on average make less than their male counterparts. Both Republicans and Democrats – Ivanka Trump and Michelle Obama, for example – agree with me on this. So, for that matter, does the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, which has found that women earn about 83 cents to every dollar a man earns, on average.

So why are Millennial men still asking me if being a feminist is “even necessary” nowadays?

I think in part, this problem has to do with what I refer to as the Millennial Bubble. That cozy world many middle to upper class Millennials were brought up in. In our classrooms, we celebrated differences. Championed leaders of social justice. We learned about the civil rights movement and women’s suffrage. We were taught about all the ways society had become better. We learned about all the laws that were repealed and written to resolve issues of racism and sexism.

History, you see, was a required course in every year. Current Events was not. And the problem is, laws can’t erase centuries of prejudices in a snap, or even, as we are finding, within decades.

I think many Millennials – particularly of the white variety, like myself – may have grown up with the perception that our society had become blind to differences like gender and race, or that issues like racism and sexism were no longer prevalent.

My medium-rare burger eating acquaintance and I talked circles around some of these things. It ended like this.


“But what about how the men always have to pay the women alimony? Isn’t that unfair?” he asked.

“The person who pays alimony is the one making more money,” I said.

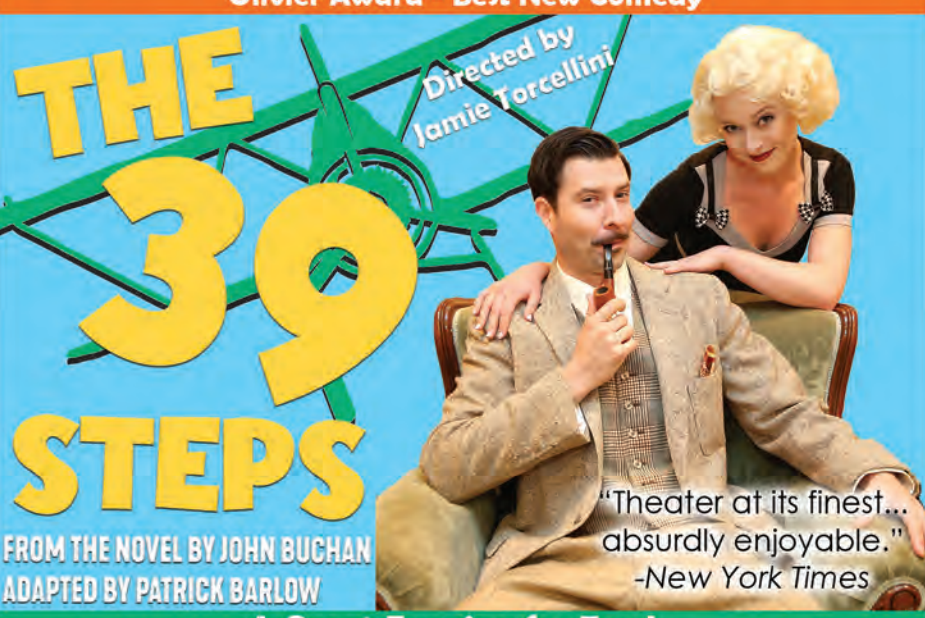
“But it’s always the men,” he protested.

“Well, women still on average make less money than men for doing the same job, even at the executive level. They’re less likely to be the one making more money,” I said, adding, with a lilt of finality, “So.”

The IPA-lover considered this quietly for a moment. “You’re a good debater,” he allowed. Perhaps jaded, perhaps realistic, I studied his expression wondering if he added, silently to himself, “For a woman.” ■


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Soul Purpose

Michelle Armor, the owner of Soul Purpose, described herself as an “intuitive.” “I don’t need any information; I’m just able to tap in and see your whole life,” she said. This is a talent, Armor explained, that she has possessed her entire life. “I could see into other people’s lives when I was three or four years old. I didn’t know I was different. I was able to read adults when I was very young and they would kind of trip out.” At Soul Purpose, Armor offers both in-person and virtual intuitive sessions, where she guides her clients to the right path for them. She specializes in couples’ therapy and helping clients overcome addictions. Armor estimated that she has about 5,000 clients worldwide, some of whom speak to her through a translator. Armor employs six healers and plans to add on three more by the end of this month. “We have hypnotists, tarot card readers, herbal healers, reiki masters – we all do something different,” she said. Armor described reiki as a form of healing in which practitioners move their hands over a client to clear blocked energy. In addition to various therapies, Soul Purpose also sells crystals, candles, sage, jewelry and incense. “In just over two years of business, I’ve only sold one thing,” Armor remarked. “I’ve probably given away about \$20,000 worth in products. I believe in paying it forward.” Soul Purpose is located at 1032 Redondo Ave. For more information, visit soulpurposelongbeach.com or call 714/745-5322.

Thai Curry Pizza

Sam Vanavi, the owner of Thai Curry Pizza, moved to Los Angeles from Bangkok, Thailand, when he was 24. Although he had already earned a graduate degree in Thailand, he obtained another degree at a business college in L.A. “I had to start all over,” he said. After a string of odd jobs, he opened Indra Thai Restaurant in Glendale in 1975, which his son now manages. Vanavi’s wife, Sue, a co-owner of Thai Curry Pizza, suggested merging her native cuisine with pizza to appeal to more customers. “The pizza is good for the kids,” Vanavi said. Customers are “crazy about” the Thai Curry Tofu Pizza and Tom Yum Pizza, which are Sue’s original recipes. Curry sauce replaces the traditional tomato spread on the Thai Curry Tofu Pizza, and toppings include basil, onions, bell peppers and tofu. The Tom Yum Pizza is made up of hot and sour Tom Yum Thai sauce, mushrooms, tomatoes, cilantro and chicken. The rest of the menu offers mixed cuisine such as wonton soup, a selection of Thai salads, buffalo wings and hamburgers. Although there is only one Thai Curry Pizza location, Vanavi’s goal is to open two others: one near the Wat Thai Temple in North Hollywood, and the other in Thai Town, a neighborhood in East Hollywood. The Wat Thai Temple is the largest Thai Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles. Thai Curry Pizza is located at 929 Redondo Ave. For more information, call 562/987-3295.



Royal Cup Café

Raj Weerakkody, the general manager of the Royal Cup Café, started his business to escape the structure of the corporate world. “I wanted to do something different,” he said. “But the restaurant business is not easy. There’s lots of competition, and if you don’t evolve with the competition, you’re going to go under.” According to Weerakkody, the fusion of cuisines from different cultures is what sets his eatery apart. “I wanted different textures and tastes,” he said. Weerakkody draws from American, Hispanic, Cuban and Sri Lankan influences. Royal Cup Café offers breakfast all day as well as fruit smoothies, baked goods, salads and a wide selection of sandwiches. Weerakkody said the salads and paninis are his bestsellers. “They’re super different,” he said. “Nobody has what we have.” He uses a set of main ingredients and mixes them together in different combinations. Some of his staples include chutney, pesto, sundried tomatoes, oven-roasted turkey and salami. The café has two other locations: one in Torrance and the other in Santa Monica. “I was a businessperson, but I loved food, so I surrounded myself with really good people,” he said. “All of my staff has been with me for 10 to 15 years.” Weerakkody’s favorite part of the business is the people. “I love the interaction and having them enjoy our food. That’s the whole goal as a service business.” Weerakkody is pictured at left with manager Yona Elias. Royal Cup Café is located at 994 Redondo Ave. For more information, visit: www.royalcupcafe.com/ or call 562/987-1027.



Small Business Dollars & Sense

Finding Financing Options For Your Small Business



By NATASHA MATA

You may be overwhelmed with the different business financing options out there. From credit cards to bank loans, it can be difficult to decide which type of financing to apply for. But choosing the appropriate type of financing can play a big role in the success of your business. The key is matching the right business financing to your business needs. According to a Wells Fargo/Gallup Small Business Index survey, about one in three small business owners use their own funds or personal credit for their business. Yet as a business seeks to grow, obtaining business credit is essential and may help finance purchases, build a credit history, supplement cash flow, and preserve savings.

So how do you choose the most suitable credit option for your small business? The type of business credit you may need depends on your business goals and how much funding you need. Following are four common credit needs, and options available to address each one:

Need a way to pay for everyday business expenses? –No matter what type of small business you own, you’ll likely have to deal with the same everyday expenses: meals, travel, supplies — office and material, etc. When looking for a convenient way to pay for everyday business expenses and a smart alternative to cash, checks, and personal credit cards, business credit cards may be a good option. With a business credit card, it may be

easier to separate your business from personal expenses and immediately pay for day to day business expenses.

Need to make large seasonal purchases or cover payroll? – Nearly every small business will face a time when it needs more cash than it has on hand. A business line of credit may provide fast, easy access to cash (which can bridge gaps in cash flow) and help supplement cash flow for business expansion, taxes, insurance, or other expenses.

Want to expand your business or make a large equipment or vehicle purchase? – For a specific business need, business term or equipment loans should be considered. Loans give small businesses immediate access to funds and are ideal for business owners who want a flexible way to get a lump sum at a fixed or variable interest rate for a fixed period of time. There are many types of loans, including unsecured loans, secured equipment loans, real estate loans, and vehicle loans, and rates and terms vary.

When evaluating lending options, you should also consider an SBA loan. – Through government-guaranteed SBA loans, financial institutions are able to extend financing to a segment of creditworthy small business owners who may not be able to obtain a conventional loan or loan terms that meet their business needs. Business owners who are looking to buy real estate, acquire a new business, purchase equipment, fund business expansion, make leasehold improvements, or fund construction may find that an SBA loan offers more flexible terms than a conventional loan. SBA products include the SBA Express line of credit, and SBA 7(a) and SBA 504 term loans.

As small business owners consider credit options, you should consult with a banker to help determine the best option to meet the specific needs of your business.

(Natasha Mata, a 22-year veteran of Wells Fargo, is region bank president of the greater Central Los Angeles Area, which includes Long Beach and some North Orange County cities.)



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During its June 7 meeting, the Long Beach Planning Commission approved the development of a 65-unit residential project at 1400-1452 Long Beach Blvd. (Rendering courtesy of the City of Long Beach)

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

Commission Approves Plan For Multi-Family Residential Project

The Long Beach Planning Commission unanimously approved two projects during its June 7 meeting: a three-restaurant redevelopment of the southeast corner of Lakewood Boulevard and Willow Street and a multi-family project at 1400-1452 Long Beach Blvd. Both projects passed with four votes, as three commission members were absent from the meeting.

The commercial project will replace Spires Restaurant and a portion of the American Tire Depot. The project calls for the development of two pads for the construction of three restaurant tenants. Pad 1 will consist of a 4,238-square-foot building that will house two tenants, one of which has been identified as a Starbucks with a drive-thru lane, and the other an unidentified fast casual restaurant. Pad 2 will consist of a 2,516-square-foot building that will become a Jack in the Box with a drive-thru lane.

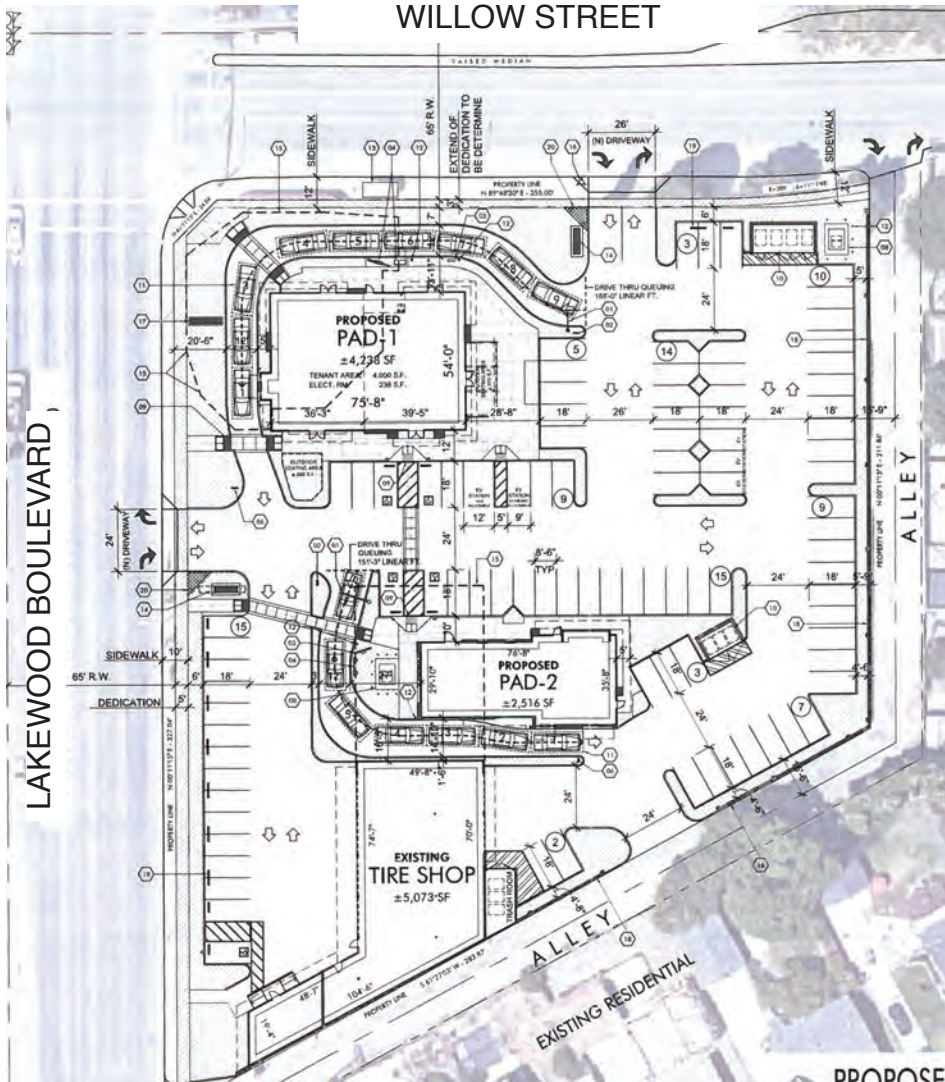
The existing tire shop is 11,000 square feet but will be reduced to 5,073 square feet and maintain its current use. The new buildings will feature a combination of exterior finishes, including smooth stucco,

wood siding, decorative tile, metal siding and metal awnings. The project includes 93 parking stalls in all, and new landscaping throughout.

The multi-family project proposal on Long Beach Boulevard includes 65 residential units in a four-story-plus mezzanine building that totals nearly 69,000 square feet of living space. The project site is currently developed with surface parking lots and auto repair and moving truck rental businesses.

The project includes 2,100 square feet of ground-floor commercial space and the residential units would be for sale. Unit sizes range from 720 square feet to 1,705 square feet and the building has a mix of one-, two- and three-bedroom floor plans. The complex will also include a total of 90 parking stalls, with 36 garage stalls, 32 covered stalls and 22 open stalls. The building includes 3,450 square feet of common and shared open space, such as a roof deck, a media and game room and a fitness room.

Included with the project is the construction of a 12,000-square-foot parklet “from the eastern edge of Long Beach Boulevard to the southerly prolongation of the eastern property line of the project site,” according to city documents. The parklet will close 14th Street to vehicular traffic in that area to provide active and passive open space for the community and future residents.



The Long Beach Planning Commission unanimously approved plans to redevelop the southeast corner of Lakewood Boulevard and Willow Street, which is currently occupied by Spires Restaurant, during its June 7 meeting. The current restaurant and part of an existing fire shop would be demolished to make way for a Starbucks with drive-thru, an unidentified fast-casual restaurant and a Jack in the Box with a drive-thru. (Site map courtesy of the City of Long Beach)

New Leases And Business Reopenings

The following is a list of new leases and business reopenings obtained from CBRE Senior Vice President David Smith, Lee & Associates Commercial Real Estate Services Principal Jeff Coburn, and Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association Executive Director Blair Cohn:

- Geosyntec Consultants signed a lease for nearly 7,000 square feet of space at 211 E. Ocean Blvd. to open its first Long Beach office location, according to Smith. The space is an expansion of their Huntington Beach office, with a seven-year lease, Smith said. The company plans to open the office on August 1, he added.
- Crunch Fitness is opening a new Long Beach location in the former 24 Hour Fit-

Supply and demand are the key elements that determine prices, however, and normally when sales go down, prices tend to stagnate. But that is not the situation right now. The number of contracts signed in April for the purchase of resale homes in the United States unexpectedly declined by 1.3% in April, according to the National Association of Realtors (NAR). The sales index for the Western part of the country was the lowest since June of 2014.

And according to the real estate website Zillow, the national median home price has increased 8.7% since last year – and appreciation is the fastest since June of 2006 – well before the recession, when the rate of increase was 9%. In the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim area, the home price increase is 8.4%; in the Riverside area it is 9.2% and in San Francisco the increase is 11.4% since last year.

“Home values are rising faster than we’ve seen in a very long time,” noted Aaron Terrazas, senior economist at Zillow. “The spring home-shopping season has been a perfect storm of strong demand and tight supply. Sluggish new construction has exacerbated the supply situation, and homes that are hitting the market are moving very quickly once they do. Americans

are also in a spending mood, boosted by recent tax cuts and rising wages.”

NAR expects a healthy jobs market and lower taxes to help housing demand, but with mortgage rates now at a seven-year high and prices increasing, many are worrying about the affordability factor.

“The unfortunate reality for many home shoppers is that reaching the market will remain challenging if supply stays at these dire levels,” said Lawrence Yun, NAR’s chief economist. “Demand for buying a home is very robust. Listings are typically going under contract in under a month, and instances of multiple offers are increasingly common and pushing prices higher.”

Considering that home values are just now getting back to pre-recession levels after a decade of financial turmoil, it is good news for those who now own their own homes that values are climbing. And it demonstrates that, despite all the hype about other investments, owning a home is still one of the most solid and stable forms of wealth accumulation.

(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.)

Realty Views

Home Is Where The Wealth Is In The U.S.



By **TERRY ROSS**

Even with the stock market and Wall Street enjoying a strong run with many share prices setting records, over on Main Street it appears that homeownership is the primary driving force for most Americans and is setting records – as it has been for decades.

According to the most recent edition of the Survey of Consumer Finances published by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, consumers’ homes – their primary residences – amount to one quarter of all equity assets held by households. Based on the latest figures from 2016, household equity is the largest part of most consumers’ total net worth, including other financial assets and retirement accounts.

“Homeownership is a primary source of

net worth for many Americans – and is an important step in accumulating personal financial assets over the long term,” said Randy Noel, chairman of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

Americans had a record-high \$14.4 trillion of equity in their homes in the fourth quarter of 2017, and the national homeownership rate of 64.2% is up after bottoming out to a low of 62.9% in the second quarter 2016. However, this number is still down from the peak of 69.2% in 2004 and remains below the 25-year average rate of 66.3%.

“We must continue to address the obstacles that remain for many potential home buyers, including factors that increase the cost to build new homes. Skyrocketing costs for lumber is the number one challenge for builders right now,” Noel added.

Real estate markets throughout the country are experiencing an unusual phenomenon in that prices keep going up – but listing and sales contract numbers are going down. The increased cost of lumber – much of it due to the trade dispute with Canada that has increased the price of a new single-family home by \$9,000 – is adding to new home costs, along with the added costs of regulations that builders encounter today.

ness located at the City National Bank building, 100 Oceangate, according to Smith. The 24,500-square-foot, state-of-the-art gym is set to open tomorrow (June 20). The grand opening party will run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and feature music, vendors, enrollment specials and raffle prizes.

• First Choice Loan Services Inc. signed a lease for 2,500 square feet at 3910 Cover St. in Douglas Park, according to Coburn. The company is relocating from its current Long Beach location at 6695 E. Pacific Coast Hwy., Suite 250, in the Marketplace.

• The R.O.A.D.S. Foundation signed a 7,000-square-foot lease at 4800 E. Los Coyotes Diagonal, for the former East Long Beach Police Station property owned by the Automobile Club of Southern California, Coburn said. The company is currently located at 121 S. Long Beach Blvd. The foundation did not immediately respond for comment and it is unknown if the Long Beach lease is for an expansion or relocation.

• After suffering a fire in December 2016, George's '50s Diner at 4390 Atlantic Ave is currently in a soft-opening phase, with a planned grand opening on June 23, according to Cohn.

Cherry & Spring Retail Center Nears Completion

Construction of the new retail strip center on the northeast corner of Cherry Avenue and Spring Street should be completed in the next several weeks, according to Robert Park, who is handling the leasing of the property. Though no leases have been finalized, Park said three should

be announced soon – a 2,500-square-foot convenience store, a 1,500-square-foot sandwich shop and a 1,500-square-foot chicken restaurant. The property has two additional storefronts with no currently interested parties.

Summer Deal Making Series For Commercial Real Estate

The Long Beach Commercial Real Estate Council is featuring Tyson Sayles of Ensemble Real Estate Investments as a speaker during its Summer Deal Making Series during its member breakfast July 13. Sayles, Ensemble's principal for residential and mixed-use properties, will focus on the company's Sonata Modern Flats development, which features 112 residential units located at 207 Seaside Way. The series offers members and guests "exclusive and unique ground-floor retail deal making opportunities for projects in development that require leases to be signed within the next 120 days," according to the council. The event is being held at The Grand, 4101 E. Willow St., and begins at 7:30 a.m. To register for the event, visit www.lbcrec.com.

Construction Costs See Large Increase In May Due To New Tariffs

Construction costs increased in May due to steep increases in building and road materials, particularly those subject to new tariffs that could drive prices even higher, according to the Associated General Contractors of America's analysis of new U.S. Labor Department data.

(Please Continue To Page 10)



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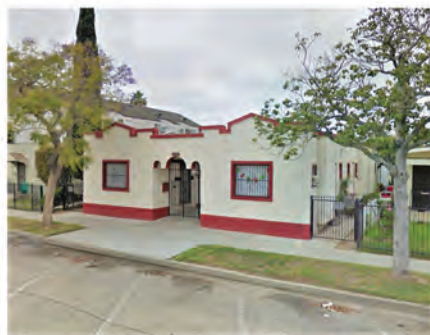
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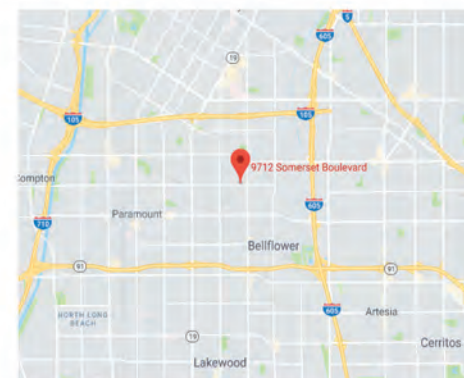
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On June 9, Loiter Galleries announced the grand opening of its newest pop-up collaborative, "Loiter Pop Up Galleries." The art gallery will be located at 375 N. Promenade at The Streets in Downtown Long Beach into the summer. The space is led by Long Beach artists

Vinny Picardi and Monica Fleming, and it provides local artists a place to showcase their work for little or no cost. "We will be the debut artists of what will hopefully be the first of many pop up gallery showcase opportunities for Long Beach artists in temporarily available storefronts," Picardi and Fleming said in a joint statement. "As cities redevelop, available gallery space is out of reach for most artists. Our goal is to ensure Long Beach artists will always have a venue to present their work." Pictured from left: Picardi; Jennifer Kumiyama, a representative from the office of 1st District Councilmember Lena Gonzalez; and Fleming. (Photograph courtesy of Pier Communications)

"Prices jumped at double-digit annual rates for metals, lumber and plywood, and diesel fuel, while ready-mixed concrete, asphalt paving and roofing materials also had unusually large increases," Ken Simonson, the association's chief economist, said in a prepared statement. "The cost of all goods used in construction rose 8.8% from May 2017 to May 2018, the steepest annual increase in nearly seven years."

Data indicates that the producer price index increased 17.3% for aluminum mill shapes, 13.9% for lumber and plywood, 13.8% for copper and brass mill shapes and 10% for steel mill products from May 2017 to May 2018. Additional increases were seen in the price of diesel fuel, asphalt felts and coatings, ready-mix concrete, and paving mixtures and blocks.

The association noted that the impacts of the U.S. imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from Canada, Mexico and the European Union have not been reflected in the most recent data. The producer price index for all materials used in construction projects rose 2.2% in May alone and 8.8% in the last 12 months, the steepest year-over-year increase since July 2011, the association added.

"Considering the impact that the mere threat of tariffs has had on materials prices and demand, prices are likely to increase further as the new trade restrictions come online," Stephen Sandherr, the association's chief executive officer, said. "Forcing contractors to pay more for materials and wait longer to receive them will make construction more costly and slower."



Stepp Commercial Sells Complex For \$4.88 Million

Stepp Commercial Principal Robert Stepp and Vice President Todd Hawke represented the seller, a private LLC, in the \$4.88 million sale of San Antonio Apartments at 1090 E. San Antonio Dr. "The affluent Bixby Knolls is a highly desirable residential area in Long Beach," Stepp said. "The property is advantageously positioned across the street from the beautiful Bixby Knolls Park. The buyers plan to add value to the property, which of-



fers a potential 15 percent rental increase in a non-rent-controlled market." Built in 1948, the two-story, 20-unit apartment complex consists of 16 one-bedroom units and four studio units. The transaction closed at a price of \$243,750 per unit and the buyer was a private investor.

Bogie Investment Group Completes \$6.5 Million Multi-Family Transaction

Marcus & Millichap's Bogie Investment Group founder Steve "Bogie" Bogoyevac and Senior Associate Shane Young represented the buyer, a local investor, in the more-than-\$6.5 million sale of a multi-family property at 3121 E. Marquita St. The Encino office of Marcus & Millichap represented the seller. The



15,638-square-foot building consists of 24 units on a 0.34-acre lot. The 1961 building includes 20 one-bedroom/one-bathroom units, three two-bedroom/one-bathroom units, and one three-bedroom/two-bathroom unit in the Bluff Heights neighborhood. The complex features 12 single-car garages, an inner courtyard and on-site laundry.

NAI Capital Sells Multi-Family Property For \$1.4 Million

NAI Capital Multifamily Services Group Vice President Mario Gandara and Associate Ramzy Prado represented the seller, a private investor, in the \$1.4 million sale of an apartment complex at 1432 Gaviota Ave. "Through our extensive marketing techniques, experience and knowledge of the market we were able to produce multiple offers," Prado said. "We created an auction environment to get the best and highest price. The final cap rate was a 4.29% and a 13.33 gross rent multiplier." The transaction is a record-setting sale on price per square footage for 1920 construction in Long Beach, Gandara added. The single-story complex consists of nine studio units and a single one-bedroom unit. The complex is 100% occupied. ■

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Signature Verification To Begin For Hotel Workplace Initiative; Rent Control Backers Look To 2020

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

While the Long Beach City Clerk's office is slated to begin verifying signatures for one proposed local ballot initiative, to qualify it for placement on the November ballot, another is still in the signature-gathering phase.

The city clerk's office tallied 46,084 signatures for a ballot initiative aimed at creating hotel worker safety protections and workload restrictions, which the Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community submitted on May 22. The clerk's office is slated to begin the verification process, which ensures that the signatures are from Long Beach registered voters, on June 21. The deadline to complete this process is July 5.

The proposed Hotel Workplace Requirements and Restrictions ordinance would apply to hotels with 50 or more rooms. It mandates that hotels provide personal alarms to employees who work in guest rooms without other workers present, and to post signage informing guests of this practice. The proposed ordinance also restricts the amount of space a worker is allowed to clean in an eight-hour workday, and bars hotels from assigning more than two hours of overtime in a day without written consent. However, a unionized hotel may receive exemptions to the proposed regulations.

The Long Beach City Council voted down a similar ordinance by a narrow margin last fall. Councilmembers who voted against it were Suzie Price, Al Austin, Stacy Mungo, Dee Andrews and Daryl Supernaw. The Long Beach Hospitality Alliance, an arm of the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, also expressed opposition to that ordinance and to the current proposal.

The Business Journal is also opposed to the initiative. "The fact that if a non-union hotel unionizes exempts it from the initiative's requirements says it all," stated Publisher George Economides. "This has nothing to do with helping employees and everything to do with gaining more union members and dues for union bosses."

The other proposed city ballot initiative would establish a rent control policy in Long Beach. After failing to meet the June deadline to qualify for the November ballot, members of the #RentControlNOW Coalition behind the proposal are striving to submit their petition signatures by July 30. If they achieve their goal, the initiative could qualify for the March 2020 ballot, according to Long Beach City Clerk Monique De La Garza.

"We were originally gunning for the November 2018 election. But we had created a multitude of plans, so depending on how the campaign ended up going we'd be fine submitting to either," Jordan Wynne, a community organizer for coalition member Housing Long Beach, said. "The sooner we can get this issue heard, the more rapidly and efficiently we can help tenants in this city." Housing Long Beach is a nonprofit that aims to improve and increase the

amount of affordable housing in the city.

The proposal would set a maximum allowable rent increase based on the consumer price index, the average that consumers pay for goods and services. No more than one rent increase per year could be enacted. It would also establish just causes for eviction and a rent board to handle appeals. It would make rents retroactive to January 1, 2017.

In addition to Housing Long Beach, other supporters of the proposal include the

Long Beach Gray Panthers and the Long Beach Tenants Union. Other organizations such as Better Housing For Long Beach and the Apartment Association of Southern California Cities have spoken out against it, as has the Business Journal. ■

City Council Approves Airport Lease With Ross Aviation

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

During its June 12 meeting, the Long Beach City Council unanimously approved new lease terms with Ross Aviation for space

the company currently occupies at Long Beach Airport (LGB), which will allow the company to develop new hangar space.

"We welcome Ross Aviation's current and future operations at Long Beach Airport," LGB Director Jess Romo told the Business Journal. "They consistently demonstrate strong operational fundamentals with excellent customer service, enhance the airport's appeal to aeronautical users, and contribute to the airport's role as an economic engine for the city and the region."

On August 21, the City of Long Beach released a request for proposals (RFP) for the development of 31 acres on the west side of the airport. The RFP included five parcels located east of Cherry Avenue, adjacent to the 90-acre former Boeing C-17 Globemaster III manufacturing site: Parcel

(Please Continue To Page 12)

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like-minded organizations. After possessing a long-term relationship with another larger financial services provider, the Rodriguez family sought funding to buy out the entire ownership shares of a silent partner whose involvement no longer made sense and, conversely, was hindering further growth and expansion of the family's security services' operations. After interviewing eight other banks and receiving five viable proposals, First Bank was ultimately chosen as their strategic partner.

"We truly felt First Bank understood what the unique needs and challenges of a family-owned business are," said Rick "Rocky" Rodriguez, Jr., President of RMI. "Both privately-held businesses, we have a common DNA and synergy."

Now, in its second generation of family leadership, RMI sees its' employees, clients, and partners as an extension of their family. Introduced to me through RMI's CPA, Lew Finkelstein, Partner at Rossi, LLP, Rodriguez said they saw us as not only a strategic partner but also an extension of their family. Much like First Bank, RMI places great emphasis on their people

and long-term relationships. "We have similar histories and family values," said Rick Rodriguez, owner of RMI and father to Rocky Rodriguez, Jr. And, as often is the case of family-owned businesses, the family's values are also parlayed into the business setting.

Striving to be long-term partners with their clients, RMI works to find the most effective, cost-efficient solutions available. "We know there are thousands of security options out there," said Rodriguez, "but our clients definitely feel a sense of partnership with us."

Poised for growth, the Rodriguez family partnered with First Bank because we offered access to local decision-making; nimble responsiveness; a creative financing structure, and are family-owned. After all, we understand family-owned business; quite simply, because we are one.



Starting with just \$300 in his pocket, Rick Rodriguez, along with his wife, Lupe, started their own security services business in 1996 to provide for their seven children. Now, with over \$41MM in annual revenues, RMI International, Inc. is one of the largest Hispanic-Owned security services businesses in the nation and a qualified Minority Business Enterprise. With all seven of their children assisting in running RMI's daily operations, they also now employ over 1,500 professionals in peak season while operating in over 17 states.



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Maria Hunter, Vice President and Commercial Banking Officer, has over 13-years of experience in the commercial banking industry. She is a passionate trusted advisor, helping small to mid-sized companies achieve economic success. Clients see her as an advocate and a partner. A native of Nicaragua, she's fluent in Spanish. Maria resides in Long Beach and is an active board member of the Los Altos Family YMCA where she was recently nominated as the Board Chair.

Ross Aviation Lease

(Continued From Page 11)

A, 11.18 acres that formerly served as parking for Boeing employees at the C-17 site; Parcel B, 2.86 acres; Parcel C, 3.17 acres; Parcel D, 6.83 acres; and Parcel E, 6.87 acres. Current LGB tenants Ross Aviation and Gulfstream Aerospace Corp. submitted proposals by the November 1 deadline.

Ross Aviation has an existing long-term lease for 12.16 acres adjacent to the area encompassed within the RFP. The company also has a month-to-month lease for Parcel C, which prohibits the company from developing the site. Under the new lease terms, both leases will be rolled into one 31-year lease for the combined 15.33 acres.

"The lease will require Ross [Aviation] to invest a minimum of \$4 million for the development of Parcel C, which no developer would undertake with only a month-to-month agreement in place, where either party could terminate upon 30 days' notice," airport staff said in an e-mail to the Business Journal. "The lease will go into effect upon the mutual execution of the agreement by landlord and tenant."

Ross Aviation did not respond to multiple requests for comment. During an August 2017 interview with the Business Journal, Ross Aviation General Manager Greg McQueary said the company plans to build hangar space large enough to accommodate two Gulfstream 650s, which he noted as a missing link for larger aircraft at LGB.

Gulfstream already has 22.55 acres under direct lease at the airport and negotiations

are still underway for its proposal for Parcels A, B, a portion of D, and land between Parcels A and D. No details have been released regarding the terms of the lease or future development plans for the site.

"We are in preliminary conversations with the Long Beach Airport about our presence there and anticipate additional discussions with them over the next several months," a Gulfstream representative told the Business Journal. "We remain committed to our presence in Long Beach." ■

Councilmember Pearce Recall Effort Appears To Have Failed

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

An initial count by the Long Beach City Clerk's office has found that the validity of about 47% of signatures gathered in an effort to force an election to recall 2nd District Councilmember Jeannine Pearce are in question. The clerk's staff is in the process of verifying its initial assessment by recounting the signatures by June 21. If these statistics hold up, the recall effort will fail.

The 9,050 signatures submitted by the Committee Supporting the Recall of Councilmember Jeannine Pearce were verified by the clerk's office. Of those, 4,266 are in question, mostly because they appear to have been made by people who do not live

in the councilmember's district or are not registered to vote, according to data provided by City Clerk Monique De La Garza. To trigger a recall election, 6,363 signatures from verified registered voters of the 2nd District would be required.

Pearce provided the following statement to the Business Journal regarding these initial findings: "The City Clerk's Office has been doing a diligent job ensuring the will of the voters is clear. We look forward to the 21st [of June] when the district and the city can fully focus on delivering the results our constituents count on."

Ian Patton, spokesperson for the recall committee, said that there had been issues with paid signature-gathering efforts provided by the Friends of Long Beach PAC. Patton would not confirm who was associated with the PAC. "They encountered a number of issues with the vendors they hired, beginning with a company called Method Campaign Services," he said. The committee never received 2,000 signatures that company collected, according to Patton. Thousands of others were received the night before they were due.

"My basic comment on the entire thing is that we ended Jeannine Pearce's career. We achieved that by getting a unanimous censure vote officially condemning her conduct on the record by the City of Long Beach, a unanimous vote of the city council," he said.

On May 22, the council censured Pearce for conduct that they alleged raised questions of sexual harassment, conflict of interest and failure to adhere to the city's ethics code. These issues stem from Pearce hiring

Devin Cotter as her former chief of staff in 2016 despite being engaged in a romantic relationship with him, as well as a later roadside incident in which the two were engaged in a dispute that resulted in a police call. Additionally, the state attorney general is investigating Pearce's office for misuse of public resources for political purposes.

Pearce publicly apologized for these matters at the May 22 council meeting.

Patton said that, despite the outcome of the recall initiative, he believes Pearce's political career is over. "She is 100% done," he said. ■

First Of Three Public Hearings Held On Proposed Charter Amendments

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

During a joint meeting of the Long Beach City Council and the Long Beach Charter Amendment Committee, Mayor Robert Garcia and City Auditor Laura Doud presented five proposed charter amendments they hope to get on the November ballot.

"I've joined with City Auditor Laura Doud in supporting these measures because they are smart reforms, common in other large cities, and will make our gov-

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Accessible CNG Fueling Stations Respiratory		
Protection Equipment	ITB PD 18-112	06/28/2018
Alamitos Tank No. 4 Rehabilitation Project	WD-07-17	07/03/2018
Seismic Feasibility Study for Comm. Hospital of LB	RFP DV18-109	07/10/2018
Solid Waste Handling Services	RFP PW18-098	07/10/2018
Citywide Custodial Services	ITB LB18-082	07/24/2018
On-Call Public Health & Human Services	RFQ HE18-099	07/31/2018
Community PartnersQualification	RFQ DV17-112	Continuous
and Selection of Peer Reviewers		

****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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One of the Long Beach Charter Amendments Proposed Is To Provide A Third Four-Year Term For The Mayor And City Councilmembers

ernment more effective and efficient,” Garcia told the Business Journal following the hearing.

State law requires that three public hearings be held over a 60-day period prior to any decision being made to place city charter amendments on a ballot and that a majority of voters must approve them. The next charter amendment hearings are scheduled for July 17 and August 7. During these meetings, updated information will be presented, public comment will be heard and changes to the proposed amendments will be made. At the final hearing, the city council will decide whether to put one, some or all of the proposed charter amendments on the November ballot, according to City Attorney Charles Parkin.

If placed on the ballot and approved by voters, the five amendments would: allow for the mayor and city councilmembers to serve three terms rather than two, and eliminate the term-limits loophole for write-in candidates; create a citizens redistricting commission that would redraw city council districts every 10 years, with the first new map being adopted before the end of 2021; authorize the city auditor to conduct performance audits of city departments, boards, commissions and offices; consoli-

date the water and gas departments under a newly formed Utilities Commission; and establish an ethics commission comprised of Long Beach residents to monitor, administer and enforce governmental ethics laws in the city.

“In regard to the city auditor authority charter amendment, this change is needed to update 110-year-old, obsolete language. [It] will make it explicit and accurately reflect the performance audit services that we’ve been providing for decades,” Doud told the Business Journal. “We also want to make it explicit in the charter that we are authorized to examine all city records – unless restricted by law – that are necessary to conduct honest and thorough audits.”

Doud explained that the city auditor amendment would bring Long Beach more in line with the auditing profession’s standards and best practices, as well as those of other major California cities such as Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco and Sacramento. She added that she fully supports all five charter amendments, as they would provide transparency and accountability in the city government.

Garcia stated that the redistricting commission is especially important to him, as city councilmembers should not be drawing their own districts. He added that the goal is to ensure the city’s diverse communities are represented fairly and that he hopes commission applicants will be selected at random, as opposed to being selected by the mayor, similar to the City of Los Angeles system.

More than 40 minutes of the one-hour hearing were dedicated to public comment

during which there was some dissent but mostly support. However, many supporters shared concerns about the phrasing and vagueness of some of the amendments. Garcia assured members of the audience that he looks forward to working with residents and advocate groups to hash out the finer details of the proposals, a sentiment echoed by several councilmembers, including Vice Mayor Rex Richardson.

“I just wanted to let the public know, I hear you. We’re not just a rubber stamp,” Richardson said during the hearing. “This is an exciting process, I believe, to make our city work better and we want you to engage in that process.”

Business Journal Publisher George Economides said that, with one exception,

he could support the amendments. That exception: a third term for the mayor and city councilmembers.

“If the recommendation is that current elected officials would be able to serve a third term, then voters will view it as self-serving and defeat it, and in fact could cause all five amendments to lose,” he said. “There are a lot of talented, smart people who live in Long Beach who don’t run because it’s extremely difficult and costly to go up against an incumbent. Leadership change is good, bringing new ideas is good.”

He added, “Remember, if your constituents like the job you’re doing and want to keep you around a third term or longer, you can run as a write-in.” ■

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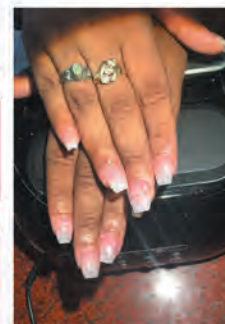
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Plan Released For America's First 100% Renewable Power/Hydrogen Generation Station At Port Of Long Beach

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

The Port of Long Beach and its tenant, Toyota Logistics Services (TLS), have released a draft plan for North America's first 100% renewable megawatt carbonate fuel cell power generation plant as part of planned improvements to Toyota's Pier B terminal at the port.

The company, a division of Toyota Motor North America, is seeking to consolidate its facilities within the existing terminal foot-

print and to build a fuel cell plant called Tri-Gen that would produce hydrogen to supply a new hydrogen pumping station for the company's hydrogen-powered vehicles, such as the Mirai.

"When it comes online in 2020, Tri-Gen will generate approximately 2.35 megawatts of electricity and 1.2 tons of hydrogen per day, enough to power the equivalent of about 2,350 average-sized homes and meet the daily driving needs of nearly 1,500 vehicles," an announcement made by Toyota in November stated.

The function of the Toyota's Port of Long Beach facility is to receive and process vehicles from overseas, according to James Yarber, senior manager of TLS. "For our dealers, we put on post production accessories to the vehicle. We add vehicle content to help our dealers increase the sale of the unit," she said of work at the terminal. "And then the second thing we do is we're responsible for the logistics of those units from the facility to our dealer network on the West Coast," she explained. Vehicles are distributed both by truck and by rail.


Multiple buildings onsite would be combined into a new LEED certified structure, according to the plans. Russ Koble, manager of brand communications for TLS, said the changes would result in a "big reduction" in air emissions at the facility. Consolidated operations would include offices, car washing, fueling, auto body work and other services, according to a statement from the port.

Richard Cameron, managing director of planning and environmental affairs for the port, is excited about the future potential of the project beyond Toyota's immediate needs. He noted that Toyota is testing a zero-emission, hydrogen fuel cell powered Class A semi-truck within the port complex, and speculated that the development of this technology could be partly behind Toyota's motivation in building hydrogen fueling station. Yarber confirmed this.

Cameron said he hopes that, down the road, there might be the potential to form a private-public partnership with Toyota for hydrogen fueling needs if the new drayage technology takes off on a larger scale. "These are exciting times," he said.


A final internal vote by Toyota on whether to go forward with the project is scheduled in August, according to Yarber. "After that point we will be ready to break ground. And our hope is to do that prior to the end of calendar year 2018," she said.


The draft study for the project is available for public comment at www.polb.com/ceqa. ■



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San Pedro Bay Ports To Give Update On Clean Air Action Plan

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are hosting the second advisory meeting of 2018 on June 26 to discuss progress on the San Pedro Bay Ports Clean Air Action Plan (CAAP) 2017 update. The meeting will take place from 1-3 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Los Angeles Harbor Hotel, 601 S. Palos Verdes St., San Pedro.

The 2017 update is "a comprehensive strategy for accelerating progress toward a zero-emission future while protecting and strengthening the ports' competitive position in the global economy," according to a joint statement released by the ports. Since the plan's original adoption in 2006, San Pedro Bay port-related diesel particulate matter has decreased 87%, nitrogen oxide emissions have decreased 56% and sulfur oxide emissions have decreased 97%. The 2017 update set target dates for a reduction of greenhouse gases to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. The plan acts as an extension of California Assembly Bill 32, which passed

last year and calls for greenhouse gas emissions to be reduced to 1990 levels by 2020.

The ports are holding up to four advisory meetings in 2018 to update stakeholders on the plan's progress. The first meeting was held on March 29. During the upcoming meeting, staff from both ports will discuss near-term priorities for implementation, next steps for the Clean Truck Program, the status of technology demonstrations and timelines for feasibility assessments.

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The 2017 update is "a comprehensive strategy for accelerating progress toward a zero-emission future while protecting and strengthening the ports' competitive position in the global economy," according to a joint statement released by the ports. Since the plan's original adoption in 2006, San

(Please Continue To Top Of Next Page)



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The meeting is open to the public and those in attendance are allowed to comment on CAAP and its implementation. For more information on CAAP, visit www.cleanairactionplan.org.

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Wells Fargo Celebrates The Grand Opening Of Its Newest Long Beach Branch

Though it opened for business on April 2, the new Wells Fargo Bank branch at 4411 E. Pacific Coast Hwy. celebrated its grand opening on June 16. The event included a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a photo booth, games, a DJ and face painting. Appearances were made by the L.A. Galaxy's Efrain Alvarez and the iconic



Wells Fargo Stage Coach. Chick-fil-A, which shares a parking lot with the new branch, catered the event. The branch has 10 team members and the services it provides include cashier checks, check cashing, money orders, new account openings, notary services, medallion stamping, mortgage consulting and financial advising. Pictured from left: Dennise Banuelos, service manager; Shabnam Ebrahimi, Beach Harbor district manager; Jason Guerrero, personal banker; Dina Noe, branch manager; and Dorsha Wilson, personal banker. Not pictured: Natasha Mata, region bank president; Javier Marquez, personal banker; and tellers Araceli Garibaldo, Arlene Nava, Keiona Dismute, Selene Hernandez and Tiffani Davila. (Business Journal photograph by Brandon Richardson)

State Program Invests \$12 Million In Reducing Homelessness In Long Beach

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

Long Beach joins California's largest cities in receiving one-time funds from the state's Homeless Emergency Aid Program. The program's budget for fiscal year 2019 allocates \$12 million for city initiatives to fight homelessness.

Since January, the mayors of California's 11 most populated cities have advocated for state funding to address homelessness, since they are on the front lines in combating the crisis. Representatives of these cities will work with the California Department of Housing and Community Development to develop spending plans by the end of this year. Grant recipients will com-

pile a report by January 1, 2020, detailing expenditures, the number of homeless individuals served, and progress toward homelessness reduction goals.

This grant comes as the city is beginning its Everyone Home Long Beach initiative, an effort to increase cohesiveness among the programs already in place to address homelessness. A task force comprised of community leaders is at the forefront of the program, and they met on Friday, June 15 for the first time.

"Securing these funds was the top legislative priority of California's big city mayors," Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia stated in a press release. "For Long Beach, it means significant funding for us to meet our goal of opening a year-round city shelter, and some innovative approaches to addressing homelessness across the city."

The Homeless Emergency Aid Program budget includes \$500 million in one-time funding to local governments. Statewide, the funding will be split three ways: \$250 million allocated to continuums of care; \$150 million to a city with a population of more than 330,000; and \$100 million for continuums of care based on each city's homeless count.

While the Long Beach Rescue Mission

and the city's Catholic charities currently provide access to 259 shelter beds, the city's homeless population of 2,000 exceeds that supply. Garcia's goal is to open a year-round shelter that serves more than 125 people per night.

City staff are drafting a list of other possible one-time expenditures, including stor-

age and transportation to support the shelter; grants to organizations offering innovative approaches to tackling homelessness; and a pilot program to fund work opportunities. Obtaining the funds requires the city to declare a homelessness crisis, an action the Long Beach City Council is implementing in the next few weeks. ■

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John Howard, the new chair of the board for the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, became the first owner of a freestanding Chick-fil-A franchise in Los Angeles County when he opened his restaurant in 2006. The restaurant, which has 95 employees, is located at Long Beach Towne Center in Northeast Long Beach. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Pat Flynn)

New Chamber Board Chair John Howard

(Continued From Page 1)

When Howard graduated from high school in 1991, the Air Force recruited him, offering to pay for him to attend a college of his choice so long as he enlisted when his studies were completed. "I decided to go to Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach . . . and the rest is history. I learned how to fly airplanes at Embry Riddle," he said.

Upon graduating, Howard became a second lieutenant in the Air Force and did a stint at Vandenberg Air Force Base before undergoing military pilot training at Columbus Air Force Base in Mississippi. "After that, I went to Little Rock Air Force Base flying C-130s, and then back to Nashville at the Air National Guard Unit to fly C-130s there," he said, referring to the "work horse" aircraft used to transport everything from the president's motorcade to paratroopers.

"The highlight of my C-130 career was on the afternoon of September 11," Howard said. "We were just watching on TV like everybody else . . . And the next thing you know, our phone is ringing at the squadron and it's Tennessee Donor Services. They said that they had a dying baby at Vanderbilt Hospital. They were taking the liver out of this baby to get to a donor recipient in Houston, Texas. But all the commercial flights were grounded," he recalled. Howard and another pilot assembled a crew, coordinated with the U.S. Department of Defense and the Federal Aviation Administration, and managed to get permission to fly the liver to Houston even as nearly all air traffic in the nation was being grounded. The donor recipient of that liver is now 17 years old, Howard said.

"Because of that 9/11 mission I really

got the bug to do something more impactful and influential for people," Howard said. Soon after, he decided to pursue a career as a franchise owner within the Chick-fil-A brand. He filed an application with the company in 2003, which reached out to him a year later to see if would be interested in applying to run its first standalone location in Los Angeles County at the new Long Beach Towne Center.

"What they encourage people like myself who had not worked in the restaurant business to do was just go meet owners,

franchisees," Howard said. "That's what I was doing when I was in Nashville. So on days when I wasn't flying, I was literally going to my local Chick-Fil-A and learning from a guy named Bill Fender and his wife, Karen."

Howard left the Air Force in 2005 and opened the restaurant in Long Beach in 2006. He started with about 10 employees. Today he has 95. "We roll our biscuits fresh every day. . . . There is a lot of labor that goes into Chick-fil-A products, because it's all done by hand," he said.

"I joined the chamber in 2005 before my restaurant was even open. I am that passionate about business in this community," Howard said. "I learned that from other Chick-fil-A operators around the nation: just to get involved in the community and try to give back and have a working relationship. It really is important."

Since then, Howard has served a total of nine years on the chamber board and has previously served as vice chair of membership and vice chair of community development. He has also been a member of the chamber's government affairs council and sits on the small business council.

At the chamber's annual retreat last month, Howard debuted his theme for the year: "TEAMwork Makes The Dream Work." "I use TEAM as an acronym where the T stands for Talent, the E stands for Evolve, A is for Atmosphere, M is for Membership," Howard said. "Those are the four major areas of focus I have for this year."

Talent is a major focus for Howard because it is under his watch that a future replacement for Senior Vice President Jeremy Harris will be selected. Harris is due to step into the role of president and CEO of the chamber when Randy Gordon leaves the position in 2020. "First and foremost we have to make sure we nail that one," Howard said, calling the position vital.

"I definitely want us to continue to evolve and to do it in a positive atmosphere. And that includes working closely with city hall, elected officials and staff people," Howard said of his priorities. "We are going to continue to foster that and then focus on membership for our large and small businesses so they can see the value."

Howard noted that some members of the chamber aren't as active as they could be. "I want to convey to the membership that you are only going to get out (Please Continue To Top Of Next Page)



John Howard, left, the new chair of the board for the Long Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, meets with outgoing chair Kent Peterson of P2S Engineering outside Howard's Chick-fil-A restaurant at the Long Beach Towne Center. The two share a passion for small business. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Pat Flynn)

of it what you put into it,” he said. “Me as a small business owner, I tried to attend breakfasts, and if I couldn’t I would go to an evening mixer of some sort. But there are a lot of people who are in the chamber who just don’t do that. . . . So we are going to try to get the membership to understand the value.”

Howard sees the role of the chamber in the Long Beach community as a driving force for business. He quoted Harris’s philosophy that the chamber should focus on “three C’s,” which include being “a catalyst for business growth, a convener for leaders and influencers, and the champion for stronger communities in Long Beach,” he explained. “If we can do those things and do them well, we will be the premiere business force in the city.”

Asked if he approves of the chamber having an affiliated political action committee (PAC), Howard said the PAC is important to business advocacy. The PAC is a separate legal entity from the chamber, he noted. “I am a big fan of the PAC. I really believe it’s vital, because so many things come down – from electing officials, to propositions and measures in the city – and we need a body that can look at that and advise the chamber membership as to the validity of it and whether or not it’s helpful for business,” he explained.

Howard added, “For a small business owner like myself . . . I can remember clearly days when I just did not have a chance to look at anything political. And my main go-to source was the chamber and the chamber PAC.”

There is improvement to be made as to the business friendliness of the Long Beach City Council, according to Howard. “One of the reasons that we do get involved with advocacy . . . is to hopefully get more candidates elected that are business friendly,” he said.

Going forward, Howard said the chamber needs to “come together and be a united front for business.” He explained, “I think there are a lot of other challenges that are going to come about that we are probably not even aware of right now. Going forward, I think you need someone there to be a voice and a warrior to charge and lead the way to make sure that business is heard, and that business is recognized in order to make a difference.” ■

Long Beach City Council Action

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

The Long Beach City Council is slated to vote on the following actions at tonight’s June 19 meeting:

Ordinance Allowing Adult-Use Cannabis Production And Sale

An ordinance to allow the production and sale of adult-use cannabis is up for a vote. Proposed provisions include requiring dispensaries to hold both a medical and adult-use license; maintaining buffer zones between dispensaries and public facilities such as schools, parks and beaches; and requiring businesses to attain a health permit before submitting an application. In addition, under the proposal dispensary man-

agers and employees must attend a Responsible Cannabis Vendor Program.

Requiring Certification For Massage Practitioners

Councilmembers are voting on amending the municipal code to require California Massage Therapy certification for all masseuses. This is meant to prevent personal and economic injury as the result of improperly trained practitioners. It is also intended to prevent prostitution, sex trafficking and other unlawful sexual conduct which has occurred in businesses offering massages. This item also includes making changes to the zoning code, which currently classifies any establishment offering massages as their primary service as an “Adult Entertainment Business.” The amendments would redefine them as a “Massage Establishment.”

Human Relations Commission Appointment

The city council is slated to vote on the appointment of Shefali Mistry to the human relations commission. Mistry serves as a manager of constituent engagement in the California State University chancellor’s office.

Street Improvements Contract

Councilmembers are scheduled to vote on an agreement with Sully-Miller Contracting Company for a total of no more than \$4,567,200 for street improvements to 3rd Street and Broadway, between Magnolia Avenue and Alamitos Avenue. These include repairing curbs, gutters and driveways as well as pavement resurfacing.

To Reconfigure Bicycle Boulevard

The city council is slated to vote on a contract for up to \$2,017,400 with Sully-Miller Contracting Company to make changes to the 1.1-mile bicycle boulevard along 3rd Street, between Golden Avenue and Alamitos Avenue. The existing parking-protected bike lanes will be moved from the left side of the street to the right. The project also includes new median bus stop islands, parking meters, striping and signage.

Increase To Contract With Parking Company

Councilmembers plan to decide on increasing a contract with LAZ Parking California, LLC for parking operations and management services by \$4,522,813 for a revised total amount of up to \$13,971,791 for a three-year period. City staff has requested LAZ to manage five additional locations.

Contracts Regarding Technological Services

The city council is scheduled to vote on three contracts regarding data systems equipment. Councilmembers will determine whether to move forward on a contract with GovConnection, Inc. in an amount of up to \$11,222,500 for the first year, and an annual amount of up to \$2,866,000 for ongoing replacements. They may also authorize the city manager to enter an agreement with EMC Corporation for up to \$8,605,600 for the first year and up to \$2,087,000 annually until the equipment contract expires on March 31, 2020. An agreement with Office Depot, Inc. is also up for a vote, for an amount of up to \$6,777,900 for the first year, and an annual amount of up to \$1,587,000 for ongoing replacements. The city council will also vote on a contract with Computer Aid, Inc. for installing information technology

systems in an amount of up to \$3,918,000 for the first year and an annual amount of up to \$1,250,000 until the contract expires on March 3, 2021. Councilmembers will also decide on multiple lease-purchasing agreements of up to \$19,259,000 with Banc of America Public Capital Corporation to finance the new civic center’s technology infrastructure, in an aggregate amount of up to \$21,411,000. The council will also vote on increasing appropriations in the General Services Fund in the Technology and Innovation Department by \$19,254,000 to replace and install outdated equipment.

The Long Beach City Council decided on the following items at its June 12 meeting:

Uptown PBID Renewal

The Long Beach City Council adopted a resolution of intention to renew the Uptown Property and Business Improvement District (BID), and set the date of a public hearing for August 7 at 5 p.m.

Increase To Pacific Gateway Contract

Councilmembers voted to increase a contract with Pacific Gateway by \$4,750,000 to provide residents with training and employment services for a revised total of up to \$4,850,000, and to extend it for an additional one-year period.

Grant Funding For Continuum Of Care

The city’s elected representatives voted to approve grant funding of \$8,185,190 from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the 2017 Continuum of Care for Homeless Assistance Program, from July 1, 2018, through June 30,

2019. It also authorized the city manager to submit a renewal grant application for the following year for an amount between \$8,000,000 and \$10,000,000 for July 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020. ■

Long Beach June 5 Election Results

(Totals As Of Friday, June 15, From L.A. County Registrar Of Voters)

Measure M

A charter amendment allowing the city’s water and gas departments to transfer up to 12% of gross utility revenues to the General Fund to maintain general city services.

Yes: 29,881	53.33%
No: 26,148	46.67%

5th City Council District

Northeast Long Beach/Airport area. Incumbent Stacy Mungo in a runoff with challenger Rich Dines.

Mungo: 7,360	55.33%
Dines: 5,943	44.67%

7th City Council District

Wrigley, West Long Beach, California Heights. Incumbent Roberto Uranga in a runoff with challenger Jared Milrad.

Uranga: 3,912	52.97%
Milrad: 3,473	47.03%

Board Of Education District 3

Downtown. Open seat. Runoff between Juan M. Benitez and Cesar A. Armendariz.

Benitez: 4,651	62.47%
Armendariz: 2,794	37.53%

(Note: the Registrar’s Office is counting more ballots today, June 19, and on June 22.)



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(Continued From Page 1)

MemorialCare Health System's two other Long Beach hospitals, confirmed the Molina's involvement.

An announcement earlier today by the City of Long Beach states that it would be up to MemorialCare to negotiate a transition process to keep the hospital open while MWN prepares to take over. Bishop said that MemorialCare is sticking to its plan to close the hospital July 3 and pointed out that none of the work has been done to allow MWN to begin operating the hospital.

"First of all, our lease agreement precludes us from selling, transferring, [or] assigning [the lease for the hospital] without the city. It's their land, their building, and it is up to them to come up with terms with the successor operator," Bishop told the Business Journal this morning. "What we told the city we would do is we would work to facilitate the appropriate regulatory approvals. Unfortunately, those things take many months, typically, and they have done absolutely nothing."

According to Bishop, no legal entity has been established to take over the hospital lease and creating one within two weeks would not be possible.

Bishop has met with the proposed new operators twice and has been in continuous discussions with the city since announcing last November that MemorialCare would have to close the hospital because its location on an active fault line made it uncompliant with state seismic requirements. It would cost an estimated \$80 million to \$100 million to retrofit the hospital, according to Bishop, who argued that to do so would not be "feasible" for MemorialCare.

"The hospital is going to close on 7/3. Our contracts have been canceled. Operations

have been significantly scaled down, and everyone is leaving," Bishop said. "If they want to reopen the hospital, we will work with them and facilitate that process. But if they are expecting us to work with Molina to negotiate a management agreement, not only is there not time, but that would be an irresponsible decision on behalf of our employees, and it would be frankly misleading."

Bishop said that it is his understanding that the city and MWN intend to try to make a "Hail Mary" pass to appeal to the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD) to grandfather in the hospital, making it exempt from the office's seismic requirements and thereby avoiding the necessity to retrofit. "We feel that that is irresponsible of them to do that. We also don't believe that OSHPD ultimately will be a party to that and will not approve their plan to go forward with acute care without doing any seismic fixes," Bishop said.

"The employees, the majority of them, have already left. And the majority of the balance have positions that are starting in early July. So the city is asking us to tell those employees not to pursue those positions and to basically wait and hope that this Hail Mary attempt to achieve seismic compliance is successful. And we are not supportive of that," Bishop said.

John Keisler, director of economic development for the City of Long Beach, explained that what is known as the "heritage building" on the site of Community Hospital has been deemed seismically safe, and that the city is working to submit a plan to consolidate hospital services within that building to OSHPD. He also stated MemorialCare never submitted its seismic assessments to OSHPD.

Bishop pushed back on that assertion.

"We have submitted every single report and have worked with them exhaustively to try and identify a solution," he said. "The only thing accurate about that is we never submitted a plan that was able to be approved because there was no solution. And we actually received from them [OSHPD] written confirmation that no solution was viable."

Keisler said that OSHPD has, in several meetings, made suggestions as to how services could be consolidated in the heritage building and be approved by the state. "So what's happening is that the new operator has been meeting with our building officials in the city, as well as with OSHPD and the geological survey of the State of California. . . . So we are finishing those plans and once they are done, probably in July, those will be submitted to the State of California," he explained.

But Bishop said that the heritage building's assessment as seismically safe was made before the active fault was discovered and seismic studies were conducted. "If it were rated today, it would not be compliant, and it would require what's called a seismic separation. You would have to be 50 feet from the edge of the fault and then you would have to saw the building in half and then retrofit the remaining building," he explained. "So if the city were to continue to operate it would be on a technicality of . . . looking at grandfathered buildings and it wouldn't address the safety issue."

Keisler noted that it typically takes six to nine months for the state to approve a transition to a new hospital operator, and that he and the city had hoped that MemorialCare would continue managing the hospital while MWN goes through this process. He noted that the July 3 closure date was dictated by MemorialCare. Last November,

the health system had indicated it would close the hospital by June 30, 2019.

"MemorialCare did not provide us with any lead time. Even though they have until June of 2019, they chose to close a year early. And so they forced the situation and provided us with very little lead time," Keisler said.

Bishop said that the decision was made in April to break the lease for the hospital and cease operations because more than one-third of the hospital staff had quit. "Despite putting in a generous employee retention bonus, it was staff departures that resulted in the accelerated timeline," he said. "And with any reasonable expectation of continued resignations we wouldn't be able to maintain operations and provide safe patient care beyond the actual date of the closure."

Closing the hospital on July 3 is MemorialCare's choice, Keisler said. "They have the power to work with a new group, and they have the power to keep the hospital open through this management agreement, and we're hoping that they'll work that out," he said.

According to City Attorney Charles Parkin, the city council is likely to meet in closed session around 4:30 p.m. on Tuesday to discuss the transition to a new hospital operator. The matter will then be discussed publicly at the city council meeting after the closed session. ■

Task Force Advocates For Continued Care At Community Medical Center Long Beach

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

(Note: The following article was written prior to the city's June 15 announcement that it would be negotiating with a group led by former Molina Healthcare President and CEO Mario Molina and his brother, John Molina, who served as chief financial officer of Molina Healthcare, to operate Community Medical Center Long Beach. The story highlights the efforts of local citizens and business people to keep the hospital operating.)

As the date draws closer that MemorialCare, the current operator of Community Medical Center Long Beach, is slated to give up the lease to the site, a task force of community members continues to advocate for keeping the hospital open.

The task force formed earlier this year after MemorialCare announced that, due to noncompliance with state seismic regulations, it would be unable to operate the hospital past June 30, 2019, according to Brascia Builders Owner Mike Brascia, one of the task force leaders. The facility, located at 1720 Termino Ave., sits on an active seismic fault and requires retrofitting certain structures to meet the requirements. In February, the health care provider informed the city of its intention to renounce the lease on July 3.

"A request came through [Fourth District



Pictured from left are Ross Riddle, a boardmember for Community Medical Center Long Beach and the Community Hospital Long Beach Foundation; Matthew Faulkner, the foundation's executive director; and Mike Brascia, owner of Brascia Builders. They are the leaders of a task force advocating for continued service at Community Medical Center Long Beach. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Anne Artley)

Councilmember Daryl] Supernaw to have a community task force to provide input and guidance to the process," Community Hospital Long Beach Foundation Executive Director Matthew Faulkner said. "The foundation offered to facilitate that, which means we would staff it, put an agenda together and host public meetings open to participation by any member of the community."

This year, the task force has held five meetings, with an average attendance of 75 to 80. According to Faulkner, the organization has the support of the California Nurses Association as well as the Long Beach Firefighters Association. The task force has encouraged attendees to contact elected representatives, purchase a lawn sign to promote awareness and share experiences on www.savetheer.com. "We're telling the people who come to the meetings that if they care enough to come, then they're a part of the task force," Ross Riddle, a task force leader and boardmember for the hospital and foundation, commented.

The task force leaders agreed that the hospital's location makes it an indispensable resource, as it provides a necessary service for the east side of town. "[The paramedics] at other hospitals are displaced because they may get calls further out and, in an emergency, all those seconds and minutes matter," Faulkner explained. "A man at one of our meetings said his daughter had an allergic reaction to peanuts. He brought her [to Community Hospital] and said she would not have made it if he had taken her to [another hospital]."

According to Supernaw, the city council is expected to meet in closed session on June 19 to select one of two operators to take over the lease to the hospital [Note: One bidder dropped out leaving only the group led by the Molina brothers]. In order for the hospital to continue emergency care services, it must comply with state seismic requirements by the end of 2019, as mandated by the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development. In February, Assemblymember Patrick O'Donnell introduced a bill that would extend this deadline by five years.

In April, the assembly health committee chairman elected to withhold a vote on the bill until the city produces a plan detailing how and when the hospital could meet the seismic standards. Long Beach Economic Development Director John Keisler expressed confidence that the new operator would receive an extension.

"The health committee did us a favor," Keisler said. "The committee chair has stated to the City of Long Beach that they'll consider our extension bill as soon as we have a lease agreement for a future operator and a plan for construction for retrofitting.

Other hospitals have received [extensions] after these two things are in place." Keisler said he currently does not have an estimate on the cost of the retrofit, which would depend on the operator's construction plans.

To maintain a publicly accessible emergency department, the new operator is required under state law to provide eight basic services: medical, nursing, surgery, anesthesia, laboratory, radiology, pharmacy and dietary. "Because of the state's seismic requirements, [the new operator] will not be able to provide the exact same services on the campus," Keisler explained. "Some of the facilities have been deemed seismically unsafe. [The contenders] will be presenting a plan to consolidate the emergency department and the eight basic services on a seismically safe portion of the property, and then they'll present a plan to reuse and retrofit other facilities that may no longer be acceptable for what is called general acute care. . . . It'll be a new use of some of the facilities." Acute conditions are defined as severe and sudden in onset, such as a broken bone or a heart attack.

Faulkner envisions Community Hospital transitioning into more of a "boutique" hospital which focuses on the eight basic services. "The consensus of opinion of where we're going here is to a 50-bed acute care facility that's [used for] emergency, surgery and an intensive care unit. The other services like post-operative would be in a sub-acute setting. . . . For us, that's absolutely perfect."

According to Keisler, the city's choice in operator depends upon which institution is able to negotiate a transition agreement with MemorialCare. This also would determine whether the hospital will close after July 3.

Despite the time constraint to retrofit the site, Keisler has discovered a "tremendous amount of interest" from contenders. "Operating a hospital on the east side of Long Beach is an attractive proposition for many health care providers," he commented. "The challenge is, how do they meet the seismic requirements given the short timeframe? There will be some construction that's needed to retrofit even the seismically safe portion of the facility. . . . It will take more than 18 months. We still have to have the state approve an extension so we can remain operational while we're doing construction. That's a sequence of events that's a very complex timeline because of how short of a notice we received from MemorialCare. . . . but it's all feasible and possible."

The CHLB Foundation funded a survey of residents of the east side of Long Beach and Signal Hill to determine consumer demand for critical care services, emergency care, an intensive care unit and a cardiac care unit. In conjunction with two Califor-

nia State University, Long Beach professors and an independent marketing research firm, the foundation interviewed 400 randomly selected households on the city's east side and in Signal Hill. The results, which were released in early April, show high demand for the hospital, Faulkner said.

"The staff here is very supportive of the hospital, and not just because they work

here," Brascia added. "You could truly feel these doctors can work just about anywhere. They have other opportunities, but they want to see this continue and survive. When I've sat in meetings for the advisory board, task force, or even when I'm just out and about in the community, I can see that these doctors and nurses are very passionate that it needs to stay." ■

Read The Non-Binding Letter Of Interest To Operate Community Medical Center Long Beach

A group interested in operating Community Medical Center Long Beach submitted the following letter, dated May 7, 2018, to John Keisler, director of the Long Beach Economic Development Department.

"We represent a consortium of health care organizations that have come together in the interest of operating Community Medical Center Long Beach ("Community"). This consortium is made up of:

- John & Mario Molina: the Molina brothers have over 30 years' experience in working in the Long Beach health care community as leaders of Molina Healthcare and Golden Shore Medical Group.

- AMHC: AMHC has over 30 years' experience in hospital management. AMHC owns and operates seven community hospitals in Southern California.

- Network Medical Management: NMM has nearly 25 years' experience in managing physicians and working with managed care organizations to improve patient care. NMM serves thousands of physicians in Long Beach and contracts with Golden Shore Medical Group, as well as Accountable IPA (a large Long Beach-based physician network).

We are pleased to include CSULB's School of Gerontology and School of Nursing as adjunct members of the consortium.

Our proposal would be to establish an entity that would lease the Community campus from the City and take over the current hospital license. We strongly believe Community provides vital critical acute care and emergency healthcare services and should continue its operations for the safety, health and welfare of its community. We also recognize that Community, in its current construct, cannot continue operations due to seismic requirements; however, we are willing to work with the City to reconfigure those portions of Community which meet seismic standards in order to maintain an acute care hospital and Emergency Department. We propose to continue operating all hospital services necessary in maintaining Emergency Room services, including capability to receive Advanced Life Support (ALS) paramedic ambulances. We also propose to substantially hire Community employees to provide these services.

We believe that the original hospital building meets current seismic standards and can be operated as an acute care hospital that includes an Emergency Department and 30-40 inpatient beds. In order to operate as such, several departments will need to be relocated and other parts of the facility may need upgrading. Furthermore, we intend to work with the City to develop a long-term seismic compliance plan that would allow for the continued use of the remaining parts of the hospital pending seismic retrofit.

In addition, one or more of the following complementary components would be added to transform the facility into a "health care community":

- Independent and assisted living services
- Inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services
- Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE)
- Medical Education (in conjunction with CSULB)
- Outpatient medical and surgical services
- Additional nonmedical residential (as might be integrated)

It would be our intent that the organization created by the consortium would contract with the City of Long Beach to lease the property and in turn would subcontract out for services as follows:

- AMHC would be contracted to operate the hospital
- NMM would be contracted to bring managed care contracts to the hospital, help physicians manage those contracts and provide other "back office" support to insure long-term financial viability of the hospital

In order to implement this ambitious program, we would request the following from the City:

- 40-year lease for all Community property, facilities, equipment and licenses
- Lease rate of \$1 per year
- Consultation/facilitation regarding financing for structural changes required to move certain departments into the original hospital building and upgrading/renovating other parts of the facilities
- Consultation/facilitation of the building process so as to expedite through the planning and building process

We look forward to the next steps in this process. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely"

(The letter was signed by John Molina, Dr. Sim and Dr. Wu.)



The Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau staff splashes into summer at the new Terrace Theater plaza fountains. Pictured, from left, in the front row: Lori Elgayar, Pauline Taylor, Shannon Yates, Heather Gonzalez, Susan Valen, Yvonne Riner, Gary Watters, Cindy Robbins, Sammy the puppy, Iain Campbell, Claudette Baldemor, Steve Goodling, Karen Thomas, Bob Maguglin, Jan Miller, Erica Morris, Loren Simpson, Lilian Olguin and Jamie Weeks. Pictured in the back row: James Robinson, Gregg Haniford, Aristotle Marinas and Jeff Forney. (Photograph by Matt Fukushima)

(Continued From Page 1)

As a result of the innovation behind these improvements, both the center itself and the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) have been recognized again and again for excellence in the convention industry. In 2017, the CVB was named “Best CVB in the West” at the Stella Awards, put on by two of the industry’s largest publications, *Successful Meetings Magazine* and *Meetings & Conventions Magazine*. To achieve the honor, the CVB had to beat out some of the largest cities in the Western U.S., including Las Vegas. The convention center also picked up a second place Stella for “Best Convention Center in the West,” beat out only by Honolulu, Hawaii’s facility.

Last year, CVB President and CEO Steve Goodling was named among the 25 most influential people in the meetings industry by *Successful Meetings*. The CVB won several other awards for its service and achievements in 2017, including the “Prime Site Award of Excellence” and the “Top Destination Award of Excellence” from *Facilities & Destinations Magazine*.

“There are larger cities than us. And yet, we’re getting a lot of press. You quite honestly don’t read anything about a lot of other convention centers being innovative,” Goodling told the *Business Journal*.

The re-imagining of the convention center began with the debut of the Pacific Room at the Long Beach Arena in 2013. The Arena was outfitted with a lighting and truss system capable of transforming the venue for events ranging in size from corporate banquets to sports competitions. TheatreDNA, a Los Angeles-based theater consulting firm, designed professional stage lighting for the venue, and the convention center amassed an array of hip furniture and decor – all offered to clients for no extra cost. That year, the re-designed Pacific Gallery, formerly referred to simply as the Arena lobby, and its revamped restaurant, Bogart & Co., also debuted.

The CVB has booked 140 conventions because of the addition of the Pacific Room, Goodling reported. The Arena is now in use about 254 days per year, in comparison to the 154 active use days it

was averaging before improvements were made, he noted.

Last year, the center unveiled its next biggest transformation: the conversion of an underpass outside the Seaside Ballroom beneath the plaza into an outdoor event space, also equipped with stage lighting and re-envisioned with nautical elements to give it an under-the-ocean feel. The space is called The Cove.

Following The Cove, the Rainbow Bridge, a pedestrian bridge connecting the center’s Pine Avenue promenade to the Terrace Theater plaza, debuted late last year. The bridge not only provides better connectivity throughout the center, but also mimics the lighting design of the center’s new turnkey venues with programmable LED lights lining its length.

Amongst these venues, a common element is lighting – each were outfitted with similar lighting schemes and equipment by TheatreDNA, Goodling explained. Charlie Beirne, general manager of the convention center, noted that his staff is able to program the lighting and sound for each space to create a cohesive,

immersive experience so that, if multiple venues were to be utilized at once, their elements would be in sync as guests walked from area to area.

The total investment in the Pacific Room, Pacific Gallery and Bogart’s, The Cove, The Terrace Theater plaza and the Rainbow Bridge amounts to just over \$25 million, much of which was funded by the city’s Tidelands Fund. The CVB and SMG, the management company that operates the convention center, also chipped in, according to Goodling.

Now, with the debut of the fountains, which offer colorful Bellagio-style water shows programmed to music, these contemporary venues combine to put the center on “the cutting edge” amongst its competition, according to Beirne. “Steve [Goodling] says it all the time and I agree wholeheartedly that we certainly are ahead of the curve moving forward to attract new business compared to other convention centers,” he said.

Goodling pointed out that equipping the convention center with unique event

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Over the past five years, multiple re-imagined events venues have debuted within the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, from the Pacific Room at the Long Beach Arena, outfitted with a theatrical truss and lighting system able to accommodate corporate luncheons, concerts, major sporting events and more; to the urban, outdoor underpass setting of the Cove, complete with sparkling neon trees, plenty of space for dancing and perfect for food trucks; to the Rainbow Bridge, an LED-lit art piece that does double duty as a connection from the Terrace Theater to the center's Pine Avenue promenade. (Photographs provided by the Long Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau)



(Continued From Page 20)
spaces is a major component of keeping the center competitive. The facility's main source of competition is among big box hotels, which offer both sizable convention and meeting space in addition to hotel rooms and food service.

"Generally speaking, those hotels will greatly reduce the rental rate for the meeting space because they are making their [profit] on the in-house food and beverage that's captured, and the room service and the hotel sleeping rooms," Goodling explained. Convention centers like the one in Long Beach don't have those additional revenue streams, making it more difficult to keep rental rates for meetings competitive. "As an organization, we have to help offset the convention center's costs. We share those rental reduction requests with our board and they help in reviewing and

approving what needs to be done, and Charlie will reduce his rental [rates] and the hotels will also contribute additional monies to help offset [the reduction]," Goodling explained.

"That's why our drive to create these unique spaces has been so important, because these unique spaces set us apart," Goodling said. "You really can't find these in large box hotels, nor can you find them in other convention centers."

The center has picked up a lot of short-term business, events that are booked without much advance notice, this year, according to Goodling. He estimated that, by year's end, meeting and convention bookings will have increased up to 3% in comparison to 2017. "Next year, our convention business is looking strong. We're up about 14% and, even though the economy is softening in many markets in terms of convention business, we still have a lot on the books and we should be doing very fine next year," he said.

What's Next?

Goodling and Beirne haven't stopped dreaming of more improvements to make to the center. In fact, they argue that some changes will be necessary to accommodate the Olympics in 2028.

"In order for the Arena to be successful with the Olympics, it needs . . . sports lighting up to international standards. It needs new stadium seats. We also really need to revisit the exterior," Goodling said. "And we also need to enhance the space on the backside of the Arena lobby, which basically is more or less an area for trucks to drive up to. . . . You're along the waterfront, the Pacific Ocean. You really should be using that as a venue."

Goodling added the bathrooms in the Arena also need to be redone. "The entire facility of the Arena needs work before 2026," he said. Beirne pointed out that the concessions areas in the Arena date back to 1962, and also need updating.

"The other thing that has been discussed . . . is building some type of deck that overlooks the Pacific Ocean off of the Arena," Goodling mused. "You could do private functions on this deck for 400 to 500 people, and then building a kitchen. The view is looking down the coast."

Discussions about future improvements are in preliminary stages, Goodling noted, adding that the mayor and city staff have inquired about how to best prepare the facility for the Olympics. He estimated that, to be ready in time, improvements need to get going within the next three years. ■



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Hotel Investment

(Continued From Page 1)

years. Many existing hotels have millions of dollars in renovations planned and will unveil new lobbies, restaurants, bars and event spaces within a year.

“What we see is a market that is in significant transition. The opportunity to be on the waterfront in a market like that, with all the investment that’s going into it – we just see all the signs pointing in the right direction,” Chris Atkinson, managing partner of commercial developer Pacific Property Partners, said. “It’s now just a matter of being very strategic about what the best fit is for these different projects and what’s going to work well for the city and the community. We are very bullish about the opportunities in Long Beach.”

Pacific Property Partners has plans to bring 400 or more new hotel rooms within blocks of the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center. The most publicized is the conversion of the historic Security Pacific National Bank building at 110 Pine Ave. to a 200-plus room boutique hotel to be named Cambria Hotel. The ground floor and basement of the building will remain occupied by restaurant, bar and venue The Federal



Pacific Property Partners (PPP) purchased the historic Security Pacific National Bank building at 110 N. Pine last year. The development company has submitted the initial project proposal to the city for a roughly 200-room Cambria hotel. Pictured: PPP Managing Partners Barry Beitler, left, and Christopher Atkinson. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Brandon Richardson)

Bar. The remainder of the building, which formerly housed offices, is already vacated.

An initial project submission has been submitted to the city, according to Atkinson, who said a time is being scheduled for the company to go over the city’s feedback. He explained that, if everything goes smoothly, he hopes to start construction by the first quarter of next year. The buildout is expected to take 16 to 18 months, with completion expected in mid-2020, Atkinson added.

The hotel will have a rooftop venue of some sort and will include some element of food service in addition to The Federal Bar offering, Atkinson said. He added that Cambria hotels are known for their high-tech guest rooms and fitness rooms, as well as meeting space that caters to convention groups.

The purchase of 110 N. Pine Ave. by Pacific Property Partners last year included the parking structure at 123 W. 1st St. between L’Opera Italian Restaurant and another parking structure on the corner of 1st Street and Pacific Avenue. The company is also in escrow to purchase the 12-story Salvation Army Building at 180 E. Ocean Blvd., which currently houses offices. One of these two properties will be converted into another 200-plus room hotel, but



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the company has not yet decided which.

If 180 Ocean does not become a hotel, Atkinson said the company has also considered maintaining its office use or converting it to a residential building. The 1st Street parking structure would be demolished to make way for a hotel, residential units or both.

“What we were thinking on 1st Street is we are looking at the possibility of hotel with residential above it,” Atkinson said. “We’re playing with various designs and looking at feedback from the city, but I think we’re pushing [for] 25 floors or so.”

Once the company completes all three projects, Atkinson said the combined investment could be upward of \$250 million.

The largest new hotel proposed in Long Beach is a 30-story structure by Seattle-based American Life Inc. Located at the former site of the historic Jergins Trust Building, which has been vacant for 30 years and currently serves as a parking lot, the hotel will include around 426 rooms, according to American Life President Greg Steinhauer. Current designs also call for 22,500 square feet of meeting space and the highest rooftop bar on the coast of Southern California, he added.

The project is currently in entitlement



American Life Inc. has unveiled plans for the largest new hotel proposed in the city at the former Jergins Trust Building site near the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center. The 30-story hotel will include about 426 rooms and the highest rooftop bar on the Southern California Coast, according to the American Life President Greg Steinhauer. This will be the first new, major, full-service hotel to be built in Long Beach in 27 years, he added. (Rendering courtesy of American Life)

and undergoing environmental review, Steinhauer explained. He said the company hopes to have planning commission approval by August. A groundbreaking is anticipated for late spring next year. The buildout is estimated to take 18 to 20

months, with a target opening during the fourth quarter of 2021, Steinhauer said.

“We think it’s the 50-yard line of Long Beach at the intersection of Ocean and Pine, adjacent to the convention center. It’s a great location,” Steinhauer said. “It’s a market that

is rapidly changing and becoming much more dynamic and we wanted to be part of that. And there hasn’t been a new, major, full-service hotel built in Long Beach in about 27 years. So, I think it’s time.”

John Molina and his partners at locally based investment firm Pacific6 are working to complete designs for their previously announced repositioning of The Breakers, a historic building located at 210 E. Ocean Blvd., into a boutique hotel. Molina explained that progress is being made toward the final designs, with architectural and design teams on board for the project. He said the lobby design is going to be stunning and unlike anything in Long Beach.

The project will likely have about 170 rooms, though Molina said the number may fluctuate a bit until designs are finalized. Included in plans is an overhaul of The Sky Room, which will reopen within the hotel under the same name. The Cielo rooftop bar will also be refreshed and enlarged, and will open under a new name. The boutique hotel will also have a pool deck overlooking the Long Beach Performing Arts Center, a jazz club, a spa and a lobby bar and restaurant, Molina added.

Aside from appealing to the guests,

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The Hospitality And Tourism Industry

(Continued From Page 27)

Molina said he hopes the project will appeal to Long Beach residents and that its bars and restaurants become local hot spots. The project is going through the permitting process now, and Molina is hoping for a first quarter of 2020 opening, but noted it may not be until the second quarter.

“The nice thing about all hotels in Long Beach is the great service. You can tell how much the employees at those places care. We’re going to take that and we’re going to knock it up a notch. Not to put them down, but you’re going to get the five-star, white-glove service at The Breakers,” Molina said. “We’re just really excited. The Breakers opened in 1920, so we will be bringing the 1920s into the 2020s.”

This summer, Pacific6 will be serving up food around the city out of a food truck called Breakers Roadshow. Molina explained that the food truck is launching as a way to introduce the community to what can be expected in terms of service and food when The Breakers reopens.

Highgate Hotels purchased The Westin Long Beach in August of last year and is now gearing up for \$20 million in renovations, according to hotel Managing Director John Ault. About \$6 million is to be spent renovating the soft goods in the guest tower, including lighting, carpet, vinyl and paint in



Part of the Holiday Inn Long Beach Airport is scheduled to be demolished in the coming weeks to make way for a 125-room Staybridge Suites concept, according to General Manager Mooyon Kim. The project is expected to break ground toward the end of July or beginning of August and is anticipated to open in November or December 2019. (Rendering courtesy of Holiday Inn)

the hallways and guest rooms, as well as new bedding and TVs. The hotel will also increase its bandwidth to one gigabyte later this year and add the new Marriott entertainment platform to all rooms, allowing guests to access their Netflix, Hulu and other streaming services. All nine elevators will also be modernized, Ault added.

“The lobby is going to transition to a

completely different look than we have now. It will be more current, modern and it will take on a nice Long Beach feel for arrival, for gathering, for collaboration,” Ault said. “Probably the biggest change in our hotel is the restaurant. The bar will be out front and center of the restaurant. We’re going to change our menu to a modern California cuisine. We’re looking for some top

chefs to be a consultant on our project.”

The Westin will also have a licensed Starbucks location next to the new restaurant, adjacent to the plaza between the hotel and the Shoreline Square office building. Ault explained that everything in the lobby is going to change, from the marble-tile flooring to the carpet to the lighting, and even the color scheme. The front desk is slated for a redesign so that customer service employees can move freely to assist customers better, Ault added. The lobby and restaurant designs also include large collaborative tables.

Room renovations are expected to begin around November, with work being done to one or two floors at a time to avoid disrupting hotel services. With holiday parties already scheduled at the hotel, Ault said the lobby overhaul will likely begin after the holiday season. The Starbucks is likely to be completed first, sometime around the end of January. The renovation schedule is only tentative, Ault explained, but he hopes everything will be completed by mid-to-late March.

“We want to be done as soon as we can, but we don’t want to harm any of the city-wide business that’s coming in, including [creating] any delays [going] into the Long Beach Grand Prix. So, our goal is to get it done quickly but get it done right,” Ault said. “The Orange County market is very competitive, the L.A. market is very competitive, and we want to put ourselves on the map. That is why this \$20 million investment is so important to us.”

The Renaissance Long Beach Hotel’s main lobby space is going to be updated and



The 310-room Long Beach Marriott at Lakewood Boulevard and Spring Street is planning on upgrading its rooms and corridors, according to General Manager Imran Ahmed. Pictured is the hotel’s sales team, top row from left: Catering Sales Manager Daisy Prestwood; On-Site Revenue Manager Shannon Catron; Executive Sales Assistant Jessica Martinez; Associate Director Of Sales Hector Martinez; and Executive Meeting Manager Gerald Ariza. Bottom row from left: Sales And Events Manager Marlene Robbins; Events Manager Patty Burns; Executive Sales Assistant Alex Cantu; Director of Sales & Marketing Crystal Sierra; and Senior Catering Sales Manager Marla Miralles. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Anne Artely)

The Hospitality And Tourism Industry

renovated beginning in the first quarter of next year, according to General Manager Pam Ryan. After seeing the success of the Sip Bar and Lounge in the lobby and adjoining patio area, Ryan said the hotel is going to expand on that space into other areas of the lobby. The anterior bar and patio space will have a light refresh, including minor design work and color alterations, but the rest of the lobby will see more extreme changes.

The hotel's licensed Starbucks will be gutted and completely refreshed beginning in November or December. Ryan said the coffee shop's footprint will not change but the store will be updated to include the company's newer, more modern and urban concept. The 21,000 square feet of meeting space on the first, second and third floors will also be renovated, targeted to begin in September and be completed within four to six weeks.

"We want to continue to enhance the customer experience. And there is a lot of competition out there," Ryan said. "The competition has extended way beyond meeting rooms to freestanding restaurants, bars, event venues – nowadays people are looking for experiences way beyond just a meeting room and we are working around that."

Recently, Ryan was given authorization by the Long Beach Fire Department to host events on the 2,500-square-foot rooftop helipad of the hotel. Though the space is not being promoted just yet, Ryan said it will be available for small receptions before the end of the year. The target events for the space are receptions of up to 100 people and weddings with between 80 and 100 guests. The hotel has hosted two events on the helipad, according to Ryan. She said details around safety and the aesthetic of the space are still being worked out.

The public areas within the Long Beach Marriott were updated in 2013, so there are no current plans to renovate those spaces, according to General Manager Imran Ahmed. However, the hotel's rooms and corridors are renovated every 10 years, and plans are awaiting approval to begin those upgrades at the end of this year or the beginning of 2019.

The updates to the 310 hotel rooms will include new vinyl, carpet, bedding, furniture and TVs – essentially everything in the rooms. Once renovations begin, Ahmed said every room should be done within six to eight months.

"Hotels go through a lot of wear and tear,

(Please Continue To Top Of Next Page)



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(Continued From Page 29)

so if you don't keep your property up to date and refreshed at a minimum of every 10 years, then it will look tired and your guests will not be happy," Ahmed said. "That's why it's imperative that any hotel go through their recommended renovation logs and keep the property up to date."

When the 399-room Hilton Long Beach was purchased in 2012 by Atrium Hospitality, the company instantly began looking at renovating the property from top to bottom. In 2015 and 2016, that is exactly what was done, according to General Manager Greg Keebler. He said that during the Great Recession many hotels did not have the funds to maintain usual renovation schedules, which are typically every five to 10 years.

"It's the guest expectation. It enables hotels to remain solvent and drive occupancy and hopefully some [increased] rates, with fresh products. Just like your home, you have to improve it over time or it's not going to be a nice home anymore," Keebler said. "There are always things that are done every single year, but they are things that don't make the headlines because they are not things the guests will see. Hotels are spending millions of dollars per year on infrastructure items, particularly in the older hotels in Long Beach."

Investment in new hotel construction is also happening outside of the downtown area. At the end of last year, the 241-room Hampton Inn and Homewood Suites dual hotel by Hilton opened at Douglas Park. Just up the street, demolition is set to begin on the two-story portion of the Holiday Inn Long Beach Airport on the northeast corner of Lakewood Boulevard and Willow Street by the end of June or early July, according to General Manager Mooyon Kim.

The existing building consists of 50 hotel rooms and is already vacated. The site will be home to a new, six-story Staybridge Suites. The hotel will include 125 rooms and 3,000 square feet of meeting space that can be divided into six meeting rooms as well as two boardrooms, Kim said.

"We saw the need for an extended stay hotel. Long Beach is booming – we've had families stay with us for an extended period of time waiting for the house to be ready. Also, we have many corporate guests stay with us for an extended period of time," Kim said. "The project will really revitalize the whole campus. We'll be able to offer more options to our guests in terms of accommodations and amenities."

The new hotel will serve complimentary breakfast every morning and offer evening



Greg Keebler, general manager of the 399-room Hilton Long Beach, said regular investment into hotels is necessary in order to keep up with guest expectations. He explained that hotels spend millions of dollars per year on infrastructure that often goes unnoticed by guests. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

social events Monday through Thursday, Kim explained. Rooms will consist of studio suites, one-bedroom suites and two-bedroom suites, and feature full kitchens with full-sized refrigerators to accommodate extended stays. The lobby will feature a marketplace that Kim described as a mini convenience store. Guests will be able to order groceries similar to typical room service and hotel employees will deliver the food and stock the fridge.

The new hotel will feature a state-of-the-art fitness center with a floor-to-ceiling glass wall overlooking a brand-new pool area to include a 2,800-square-foot deck between the Staybridge and Holiday Inn tower for the hotels to share. Two hot tubs are included in the pool area, one for all guests and one reserved for guests age 21 and over, Kim added.

In addition to the built-in amenities, Kim

said the Staybridge will offer activities such as yoga, pool exercise classes and other events throughout the week.

The demolition process is estimated to take three or four weeks, Kim explained, with a groundbreaking ceremony to be held toward the end of July or early August. Once construction begins, the buildout is estimated to take about 16 months, putting the opening of the new hotel around November or December of 2019, according to Kim. The Holiday Inn tower will remain, having been fully remodeled last year.

Maintaining A Sustainable Market

With the nearly 1,000 new hotel rooms proposed for the Downtown Long Beach market alone, questions of market sustainability and oversaturation have arisen. Bruce Baltin, managing director of CBRE Hotels, said the market should be able to

absorb the additional rooms over time, especially if their introduction is staggered over the next several years.

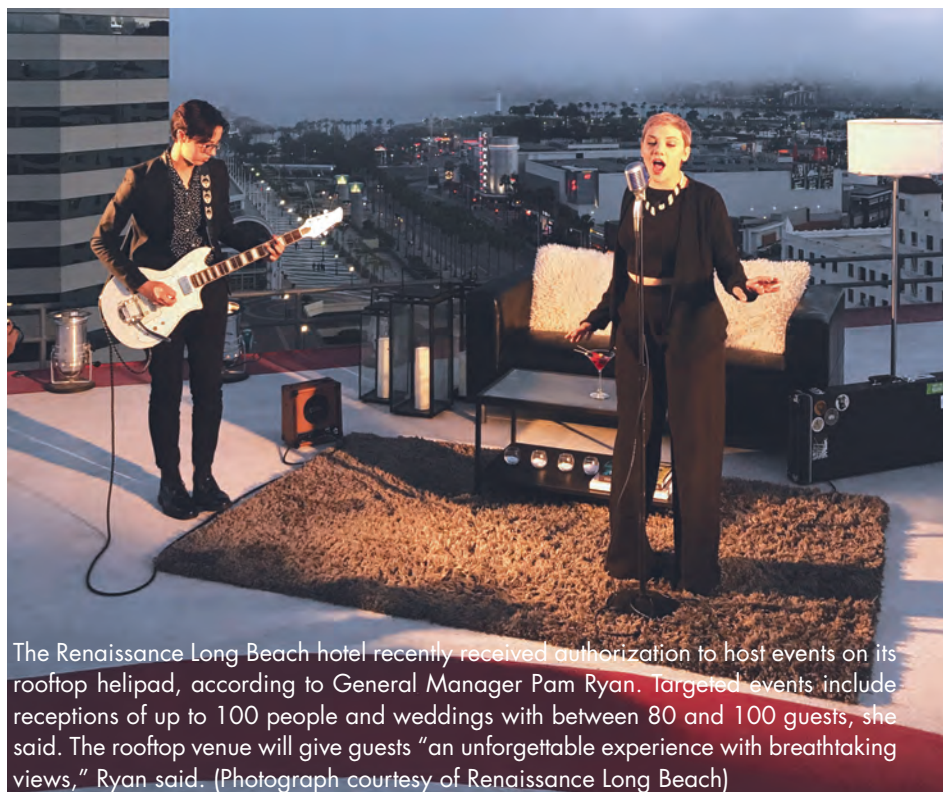
"L.A. County as a whole has been undersupplied in hotel rooms for so long that we're operating at occupancies that are really above long-term averages and levels that are sustainable," Baltin said. "For example, year-to-date, the Long Beach market through April is at 81% occupancy, the same as it was last year, which means the [capacity of the] Hampton Inn and Homewood Suites that opened by the airport was fully absorbed immediately."

Baltin explained that, if a hotel closes a year at an 81% occupancy rate, that means there were about 150 to 180 days where the hotel was at capacity. In 2016, Long Beach's hotel occupancy was 78%, and last year it was 79%. CBRE Hotel's forecast for Long Beach in 2018 was 78.6%. Though the current year-to-date rate is above that level, Baltin said the fourth quarter is typically slower for hotels in many markets. That should bring Long Beach occupancy down to previously projected levels.

The Long Beach market is considered extremely strong, according to Baltin, with the national average occupancy currently at an all-time high of 66%. He noted that, from 2012 to 2018, hotel supply in Long Beach has increased 1.6% on a compound annual growth basis, while the volume of occupied rooms grew by 3%. These numbers show that the demand for more hotel rooms in Long Beach is there, he said.

Steve Goodling, president and CEO of the Long Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, agreed with Baltin and took it a step further, saying two projects will bring a whole new niche market to the city. He explained that boutique hotel projects at The Breakers and the Security Pacific National Bank building will fill out the Long Beach hotel offerings by becoming destination hotels due to the historic nature of the sites, a niche previously not catered to in the walkable Downtown Long Beach area.

"We've recently targeted new associations that previously could not meet at the convention center because we did not have enough downtown hotel rooms immediately around the convention center," Goodling said. "We just got verbal approval for a convention in 2026 from a board and it's 1,600 rooms on peak nights. This type of new inventory will help us attract those types of groups. These projects are great opportunities for Long Beach [toward] . . . becoming an even better-known destination." ■



The Renaissance Long Beach hotel recently received authorization to host events on its rooftop helipad, according to General Manager Pam Ryan. Targeted events include receptions of up to 100 people and weddings with between 80 and 100 guests, she said. The rooftop venue will give guests "an unforgettable experience with breathtaking views," Ryan said. (Photograph courtesy of Renaissance Long Beach)



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Jeff Forney: Family Man & Hospitality-Tourism Extraordinaire

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

For the last 18 years, Jeff Forney has taken his family values and applied them to his work at the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). Born and raised in Redondo Beach, Forney attended El Camino Community College before transferring to California State University, Dominguez Hills, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in recreation.

"My mom said to just follow my heart," Forney said. "I loved to play. I was very active in sports. I played basketball in high school, some volleyball in college, volleyball on the beach, cycling, running, all of that. I was a total beach guy."

"I had beautiful blonde hair at one point," he added with a hearty laugh.

During college he worked as a bellman at a Marriott hotel, which was his first professional introduction to the hospitality industry. After graduation, Forney worked at a teen center in Manhattan Beach, followed by a stint at a boys home in the San Fernando Valley. In the early 1990s, he oversaw a new teen center for the City of Redondo Beach. Forney noted that, at the time, teen centers often closed after eight months; however, after two years of building the program and laying the foundation, he left his position, and the center is still operating today at a larger location.

Through his work at the teen center, Forney landed a position with Main Street Experiences in Torrance (the company still operates today in Lake-wood), where he handled contracting with restaurants and attractions for senior outings. His work at Main Street allowed him to build a relationship with the new Aquarium of the Pacific in Long Beach, leading him to take on the role of sales manager at the Aquarium for the youth and senior markets, as well as tours for CVB clients.

"It's kind of been the 'who you know' versus 'what you know' for me. After two years at the Aquarium, I moved away to Camarillo for a short stint," Forney said. "I stayed in touch with people and realized I really wanted to come back to the beach, and there happened to be a position at the CVB in membership. Ever since 2001 I have been here."

Forney started his time at the CVB as the membership services manager and worked his way up to membership director. In 2006, he moved over to marketing. He noted that, even though he does not have a degree in marketing, he has been enveloped in it throughout his post-college life, as each position he held called for marketing skills in one form or another. Today, Forney serves as the vice president of marketing, membership and special projects.

With his dad working nearly 30 years in the California State University Chancellor's Office in Long Beach overseeing contracts, Forney said he developed a love for math and contract details. His passion for math and contracts has served him well at the CVB, particularly when planning



"I love meeting new people and working with people and being in a city that's always reinventing itself and adding and improving."

**Jeff Forney, Vice President Of Marketing, Membership And Special Projects
Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau**

special events – staying within a budget and managing numerous contracts at a time.

"Some people get intimidated [with contracts and math] but it's something that I've done for so long, it doesn't faze me too much," Forney said. "Plus, being surrounded by a great team helps. We have a lot of experience that I can draw on. We can learn how to better events. We always try and improve. That's part of the fun for me, trying to improve on something."

Though special events take up a lot of his time due to the amount of logistics and planning involved, Forney said marketing and membership are equally important. Last year, the membership team went to or hosted 60 events – summer concerts, fundraisers, open houses, grand openings and mixers. He said these are opportunities for all members to connect and hopefully gain business within the community. With a chuckle, he added that people often put on weight in the hospitality business due to the amount of eating they do between events and taking clients out.

The best part about working in Long Beach is that the city, the businesses and the people are genuine, Forney explained. He said it is a distinct city, with each neighborhood having its own vibe, while the city maintains an overall authentic feel. The fact that no one is trying to be something they are not is what makes Long Beach a great destination

in the hospitality and tourism industry, he added.

"It's been a long run. Eighteen years at a company is unheard of for a lot of places but, because we're always evolving and the City of Long Beach is always evolving, it's a lot of fun," Forney said. "I know a lot of our 400 members – a lot of them joined when I started. We've had 18 years of relationships with them. That's why we call it 'Team Long Beach' – we're almost like family with a lot of them."

The family-like attitude Forney brings to work was instilled in him while he grew up in his own family. His parents have been married for 60 years and he is the youngest of their eight children. Watching his older brothers and sister grow up helped shaped the person he is today, Forney said.

"Family is very important. For me, family is your support. The five closest people around you kind of dictate who you are and who you become. I happen to have eight of them, plus my wife's side," Forney said. "I always have somebody there to help me. I'm very fortunate, I really am. I don't take it for granted. I appreciate everyone in my family. If I didn't have them, where would I be?"

Forney has been married to his wife, Jackie, four years and they have a four-year-old son, Matthew. He said he loves being a husband and a father, noting how much having Matthew has changed him – more than he ever thought possible.

Though his family has to deal with his sometimes-crazy work hours, Forney said they are very supportive and often get to attend events and parties. He recalled bringing Matthew to a video shoot at the convention center's recently unveiled upgraded fountains. He said the camera crew answered Matthew's questions and let him watch them work, giving him an experience he may not have had if his dad did not work for the CVB.

While trying to provide Matthew with every opportunity to experience new things and to succeed in life, Forney said he is also trying to instill a sense of community and giving back. He said that his goal is to help guide Matthew down a path he enjoys, rather than fixating on the "almighty dollar."

In their spare time, the Forney family enjoys exploring Long Beach and surrounding areas. Forney said there are frequent trips to parks, and he tries to take Matthew to new parks as often as possible. The Forneys like experiencing new things, particularly restaurants. He explained that the family does not go to chain restaurants very often, opting to patronize those owned by locals. Forney gets his adrenaline fix by playing paintball with friends, an activity he has enjoyed since 1994.

"When you're growing up you have a vision. I never knew I'd be where I'm at but I couldn't see myself doing anything different because I get to go to events, I get to meet a ton of people – I'm very social," Forney said. "I love meeting new people and working with people and being in a city that's always reinventing itself and adding and improving. It isn't stagnant. If I was in a place that was just the same all the time, I would leave. It wouldn't be personally fulfilling." ■



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Tour Long Beach From The Couch: New Long Beach CVB Website To Immerse Users In City

It's 'Like Google Street View On Steroids'

■ By **ANNE ARTLEY**
STAFF WRITER

The soon-to-debut Long Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) website allows users to sit behind the wheel of a race car in the Toyota Grand Prix, walk the deck of the Queen Mary and peek into the shark tank at the Aquarium of the Pacific, all without stepping foot in the city.

The CVB partnered with Xplorit, a Nevada-based virtual travel technology company, and Tempest, a tourism marketing organization, to create a more interactive and user-

friendly experience. New features include a virtual tour through the city's hotels and major attractions, content shared by users, and an optimized search engine.

Loren Simpson, the CVB's director of digital communications, drew on her background in entertainment to execute an inventive design. "What's great about our CEO is that he's an innovator," she said, referring to CVB President and CEO Steve Goodling. "When I come up with these different - maybe scary at times - ideas, he embraces them. With the virtual reality component, we're trying to equip our sales directors with a better tool to explain, 'When you book Long Beach, it's a campus.'"

The virtual reality component of the new site enables users to walk through the city's 16 largest hotels as if they are experiencing them in real time and in person. The site gives potential visitors a sense of the proximity of the hotels to the convention center and the downtown area, highlighting the city's walkability.

"The big business for the convention center is big meetings, so "[the CVB] wanted to show how convenient the center is to all the hotels," Greg Murtha, president of Xplorit explained. He described the site as "like Google Street View on steroids."

Murtha clarified that the technology is designed to bring the immersive interaction to every type of device, such as smartphones, tablets or three-dimensional viewing devices. "There's basically a trend on the web: how do you make your website more experiential?" Murtha explained. "Instead of reading about the Aquarium, you can see what it's like to walk over to the shark tank or see the penguins. Our clients are trying to create a compelling experience to make people want to visit."

Another experiential component is the incorporation of photos posted to social media with the hashtag #VisitLB. "The photos that users take versus marketing pictures are completely different - you can tell," Simpson said. "That's why digital influencers are so huge. People are looking for those authentic takes."

The site's new, optimized search engine also increases the city's accessibility. "[The search bar] looks at your entire sentence rather than individual words," Simpson said. "It aggregates the information it thinks you're looking for. It assists users in their quest, which makes it more user-friendly."

The CVB collaborated with Tempest to create a unique site design and achieve accessibility. According to Jenny Rose, Tempest's director of client services, the company employed technology such as large-format photography, full-screen video and a streamlined navigational experience to connect users to the city. "Intuitive, visual navigational elements invite the visitor to explore additional pages on the website, and advanced filtering options help the visitor quickly sort and sift through local business listings to find the restaurant, attraction, or retail shop that best fits their needs," Rose said in an e-mail statement.

Although the site is scheduled to launch at the end of June, Simpson already has some ideas for future virtual experiences. "The camera could go up on the scaffolding of the POW! WOW! Long Beach murals as they're painting away, so you can see the paint dripping off the wall," she explained. "Long Beach has so many cool things: cultural festivals at the aquarium, music festivals and even a ghost tour on the Queen Mary. . . . I just want to give a teaser to bring everybody out." ■



The new Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) website contains a virtual reality component as well as a sleeker design, content shared by users and an optimized search engine. "With the virtual reality component, we're trying to equip our sales directors with a better tool to explain, 'When you book Long Beach, it's a campus,'" Long Beach CVB Director of Digital Communications Loren Simpson said. (Photograph courtesy of the CVB)



Loren Simpson is the director of digital communications for the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB). Together with Xplorit, a Nevada-based virtual travel technology company, and Tempest, a tourism marketing organization, she has implemented a new website set to launch at the end of the month (Photograph courtesy of the Long Beach CVB)

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Business Journal photograph

Long Beach Tourism Professionals Upbeat As Summer Approaches

■ By **SAMANTHA MEHLINGER**
EDITOR

Long Beach's largest attractions and tourism-based businesses are apparently reaping the benefits of a solid economy and bustling convention center, with executives and business owners interviewed by the Business Journal all expressing upbeat attitudes going into the summer.

Attractions On The Waterfront

The Queen Mary has a full calendar of events planned for the summer, thanks in part to a partnership with major events firm Goldenvoice. The company has planned a series of waterfront concerts adjacent to the ship with big names attached – the upcoming Summertime in the LBC concert on July 7, for example, features Ice Cube, The Game, Ja Rule, Long Beach's

own Snoop Dogg and other performers as headliners. And the radio station 98.7 FM is bringing back its Alt Summer Camp to the ship's grounds on August 12, with famed indie band Death Cab for Cutie at the top of the lineup.

Urban Commons, the Queen Mary's leaseholder, first introduced new events like Goldenvoice's concerts to the waterfront in 2017, while continuing its already successful annual events like the Halloween maze, Dark Harbor, and the winter holiday event, CHILL. "Events are driving visitors to the ship," Dan Eisenstein, director of events for Urban Commons, said. "We are very happy with our partner that we picked up at the end of last year, Goldenvoice, one of the largest purveyors of live entertainment in the world. We're happy with the results that we're seeing."

As the company continues to make improvements to the Queen Mary – a requirement before it begins a planned ship-side development with new attractions, shops and an entertainment venue – it continues to find new ways to bring people to the site, which is across the water from downtown and adjacent to the Port of Long Beach. Most recently, Urban Commons brought in the world's largest traveling observation (Ferris) wheel for a period of about a month, that the firm intends to bring back for a longer stay next summer, Eisenstein said.

The ship itself continues to host multiple exhibits, including the long-running Diana: Legacy of a Princess, which is finally closing in January 2019, according to Eisenstein. An exhibit on Winston Churchill, which at this time has no set closure date, details the former prime minister's ties to the ship and features replicas of his war rooms from World War II. Closing July 7 is Titanic In Photographs, an exhibit featuring photos and artifacts of the ill-fated RMS Titanic. The ship's Ghosts & Legend's Tour has also been revamped, now featuring a trip to a refurbished boiler room equipped with a massive Tesla

coil, a device that shoots out low-wattage electricity in lightning-like light shows.

The ship's hotel is also doing well, according to John Jenkins, vice president of asset management for Urban Commons. "Due to the continued efforts of the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Queen Mary hotel occupancy has continued to improve year over year and is up 4% in 2018 from 2017," he said.

Across the water from the ship at Rainbow Harbor, the Aquarium of the Pacific is celebrating its 20th anniversary year with a series of events and competitions, according to President and CEO Jerry Schubel. "We have contests that take place every day. We have some new exhibits. We have got this new film that plays every day in the Great Hall that highlights the Aquarium's observation work over the last 20 years. And we're having art exhibits throughout the rest of the year," he said.

A recent special lecture included former Mayor Beverly O'Neill and other local leaders who were influential in getting the Aquarium built, such as former City Manager Jim Hankla and current Long Beach City College District Trustee Doug Otto. In August, Vice President of Husbandry Sandy Trautwein will give a special lecture highlighting the animals of the Aquarium, particularly those that have been with the facility since its grand opening, Schubel said.

The Aquarium's newest exhibit is a tank featuring a day octopus, an active cephalopod that enjoys swimming in the light and often changes colors before guests' eyes. New Aquarium residents also include baby animals like a seal pup and three new penguin chicks, Schubel noted. The Aquarium's regular series of lectures also continues, with a full schedule available on its website at aquariumofpacific.org.

"We also continue our urban ocean cruises. There are several of those over the summer," Schubel said. These cruises

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(Continued From Page 36)

highlight the urban ocean, which stretches from Santa Barbara to the Mexico border. "More people live along that stretch than in the entire State of New York," Schubel said. "This population makes intensive and varied uses of the ocean. We've got the two biggest container ports in the country. And we seem to be able to coexist in relative harmony with nature."

With the exception of a dip in attendance in May, so far the Aquarium is "going gangbusters" this year with visitors, Schubel said. "We have checked with other institutions and most of them, except for the California Science Center, also had soft attendance in May. So something strange was happening," he said. "But I am expecting that we are going to have a good, strong summer."

Construction on the Aquarium's expansion, dubbed Pacific Visions, is progressing on time and on budget, according to Schubel. The expansion is scheduled to open in 2019, and will feature an immersive theater, an art gallery, a new exhibit space and more.

Businesses located at Shoreline Village in Rainbow Harbor are also benefiting from an increase in visitors to the area, according to Property Manager Debra Fixen. "Traffic has been up. We were blessed with great weather for the early winter," Fixen said, noting that this winter was much drier than in 2017. "Also, it just seems like there is more tourism. I see more people here every

day. I think part of it are the conventions in town," she said, adding that she is expecting the village to also benefit from the expansion of Carnival Cruise Line's terminal and the future expansion of the Aquarium.

The restaurants and shops at Shoreline Village have experienced an aggregate increase of 8% in sales, according to Fixen. One store, a candle shop, recently went out of business, but it gave another business an opportunity to expand. "We moved Queen Mary Couture over to the candle location. And then Louisiana Charlie's, the Cajun restaurant that's here, they expanded into that space," Fixen said, explaining that the restaurant expanded within the past month. "Then we had a store go out that had been here for a long time, Purple House. And that was replaced with this new, really fun trendy store called Find Your Feet." The new shop specializes in socks and sandals.

Helping visitors travel amongst these various waterfront attractions is Long Beach Transit, which offers two water taxi services – AquaBus and AquaLink. The latter provides water transit from downtown waterfront venues all the way to Alamitos Bay Landing. AquaBus operates within the downtown harbor area. The water taxis began their daily operations on Memorial Day Weekend, according to Paul Gonzales, external affairs manager and public information officer for the transit agency.

"We are also providing water taxi service

to a lot of the events for Urban Commons. So if people want to see a concert and not get in traffic to get over there, then they can take the water taxi over," Gonzales said. Last year, Long Beach Transit began partnering with Urban Commons to provide water taxi service to Dark Harbor, with the expense included in the event ticketing fee. About 30% of Dark Harbor attendees used the service, Gonzales noted.

According to Gonzales, a contractor has been identified to repair the AquaLink's stop at the Belmont Pier, which was damaged during a storm last year. "I think by next season, that will be back in action," he said.

Long Beach Transit also offers a free bus service, Passport, to popular downtown destinations such as the Queen Mary and the Aquarium. Gonzales noted that the service is facing more competition from ride-sharing services like Uber and Lyft, as well as a privately operated free ride service that uses golf cart-like vehicles to hustle visitors throughout the area. "They are offering something really different than we are. We are offering a regularly scheduled transit service that is required by federal law to provide a higher level of service," he said, noting that the Passport buses are all ADA compliant. Some of them are battery-powered and operate at zero emissions, as well.

Beginning July 6, Long Beach Transit is launching its summer-long Museum Express service, which provides transporta-

tion to family-friendly museums throughout Los Angeles and Orange counties, including the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, the Huntington Library in San Marino, the Mission San Juan Capistrano and more. The round-trip fare on the charter-style bus is \$12, with the exception of a trip to the Morongo Casino scheduled for July 21 which costs \$15, according to Gonzales.

"This is a really popular service," Gonzales said. "I think we in Southern California are accustomed to jumping in the car and going places to have a fun time, and we find sometimes when we get there that our fun time is sort of spoiled by the amount of congestion around the parking and just getting into the venue. To offer a really comfortable charter type vehicle to take people to these events is really an advantage."

Whale-Watching, Catalina Trips, And Cruises At Sea

Long Beach is home to a variety of water transit services, ranging in size from small lunch cruise operations to the 3,000-plus passenger cruises by Carnival Cruise Line. Owners and executives of these businesses described a steady flow of business in 2018 bolstered by an overall strong tourism industry in Long Beach.

Dan Salas, owner of Harbor Breeze Cruises, hopes to expand his business with the addition of a new vessel operating from Long Beach. Harbor Breeze operates daily

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Rules and Regulations

1. Nominator(s) must be directly related to the hospitality industry or registered media.
2. Nominee(s) must be an individual working within, or a hospitality company located within the Long Beach city limits.
3. All nominations are at the discretion of the 5 person judging committee and are final.
4. No nominations will be accepted after July 31st at midnight.
5. The top three (3) nominees from each of twelve (12) categories will be announced no later than Monday August 27, 2018.
6. Questions and comments should be directed to Elizabeth Borsting PR at 562.856.9292 or elizabeth@borstingpr.com.

(Continued From Page 38)

sea life watching cruises, harbor tours and chartered vessels for special events. "We have proposed to the City of Long Beach to bring to Rainbow Harbor a modern, state-of-the-art, 500-passenger vessel with California Air Resources Board-compliant engines and a handicapped-accessible elevator," Salas said. "We are awaiting city approval."

Salas said ridership figures for his vessels have been "fantastic" so far this year. He attributed an increase in ridership both to strong tourism, and also to increased waterfront visits by Long Beach residents and workers. "We're seeing people embracing and using the waterfront," he said. "There are more people walking their dogs in the morning, more people riding their bikes, more people just taking an afternoon stroll because of all the new housing and the development," he observed. "We are starting to see employees who work in the buildings around Long Beach taking their lunch break and strolling around the water."

Harbor Breeze's whale-watching tours, which are each staffed by an Aquarium representative, are in fierce competition with another company in Newport Beach that is offering extremely low fares, according to Salas. "It has made it extremely difficult for us to attract those passengers," he said. Even though some potential customers are being lured by the lower prices, Salas said

Harbor Breeze's marketing to promote its superior vessels, its partnership with the Aquarium and easy access parking is enabling the company to hold its ground. Harbor Breeze's corporate bookings for special events cruises are growing, Salas added.

"I am so proud of Steve Goodling and his team at the Long Beach CVB, and the Long Beach Chamber, the Downtown Long Beach Alliance, the Aquarium of the Pacific and the Pike, and of all the hard work by city officials, the mayor's office and city manager's office," Salas said. "We are headed for becoming a world class destination and a world class city."

Greg Bombard, president of Catalina Express, which provides daily service to and from Catalina Island, also praised the city for its efforts to boost tourism. "Something that's helping is the City of Long Beach has really worked hard on their convention options," he said, referring to improvements to the Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center. "What they have done in Long Beach with that convention center is phenomenal as far as how they have been able to . . . bring a lot of new groups to town," he said. "When people come in and enjoy their convention here, they come back with family."

So far, 2018 has been on pace with 2017 in terms of Catalina Express's ridership numbers, Bombard said, attributing the flat growth pattern to gloomy weather in May



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and early June. He noted that improvements continue to be made on Catalina Island, which ought to attract more passengers. "They are constantly upgrading the Descanso Beach Club. They have done a great job of that," he said, referring to the venue in Avalon. A second beach club has been created at Two Harbors, he added. Sports-centric attractions such as a zipline experience and parasailing are also strong drivers for tourism to the island, he noted.

"We have extended some of our marketing with the Santa Catalina Island Company where we are reaching out to San Francisco and doing some advertising up that way that we haven't done in the past," Bombard said, noting that air travel from the Bay Area is quick and easy.

Carnival Cruise Line's recently expanded terminal, which now takes up the entirety of the dome adjacent to the Queen Mary, is functioning as the company had hoped, according to Carlos Torres de Navarra, vice president of strategic and commercial port development for Carnival.

"It really is exceeding our expectations," Torres de Navarra said. "We knew that our guests would love it. But what we are seeing now is that this terminal, in terms of guest experiences, is now the highest rated terminal in terms of the embarkation process." The new terminal is not only a beautiful setting for guests, but also pro-

vides for a quicker on-boarding, or embarkation, process, he noted. "We couldn't be happier," he said.

About 650,000 people are expected to sail from Long Beach on Carnival Cruise Line ships this year, according to Torres de Navarra. "We always sail full, so those numbers are pretty consistent," he said.

In late 2019, Carnival is introducing its newest vessel, which is currently under construction in Italy, to Long Beach: the Carnival Panorama. "It'll be the first time that we put a brand-new ship out in California. So that's a huge investment and commitment from the Carnival brand to this region," he said.

The Panorama will replace the Carnival Splendor in Long Beach. But, before it does, the Splendor will take a first of its kind 24-day cruise from Long Beach to Singapore, with stops in Guam, Malaysia and Vietnam. "It is the first step for Carnival Splendor's move to her new home port in Sydney, Australia," Torres de Navarra explained. "It will be the longest revenue cruise that we have ever offered for Carnival Cruise Line." In the meantime, Carnival continues to offer its regularly scheduled cruises to Hawaii and various stops in Mexico, as well as an annual Alaska trip.

"We can't recall a time where in our minds Long Beach has been at a higher position in terms of attracting cruise tourism,"

(Please Continue To Page 42)



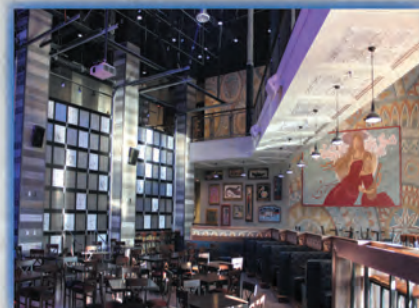
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Torres de Navarra said. “When you consider all the new and exciting stuff that’s happening here with the Aquarium as well as new improvements to current hotels and the tourism from conventions doing really well, I mean, it’s all positive.”

Torres de Navarra concluded, “I can’t state this enough: that the support we’re getting from the City of Long Beach, the mayor and the Port of Long Beach is critical.” He added, “The attitude that we see with the port and with the city is, ‘Look, we’ll make it work. We’ll find a way.’ And we love that positive working relationship.”

Long Beach Airport

Travel through the Long Beach Airport is up 9% compared to last year, according to Airport Director Jess Romo.

“The load factors are also up this year,” Romo said, referring to the ratio of passengers to seats in an airplane. “That also accounts for the increase in traffic, because it’s the same number of flights that we had last year.” Romo said airlines operating from the Long Beach Airport – which include Jet-Blue Airways, Southwest Airlines, American Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines – are better utilizing their allocated daily flight slots, and that there is an increasing demand for travel out of Long Beach. Hawaiian Airlines is the newest commercial airliner to offer service from the Long Beach Airport, and celebrated its first flight to Honolulu on June 1.



Samantha Argosino and Anthony Arredondo are the co-owners of the new Little Brass Café in the historic terminal at the Long Beach Airport. The café offers a variety of sandwiches, paninis and coffees. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Samantha Mehlinger)

“Concessions revenue continues to be strong year to date. And we’re expecting to continue to see a really good summer,” Romo said, noting that strong revenue among the concessions businesses at the airport are also an indication of an increase in the number of travelers. “We see that their revenues are up, which means the airport’s revenues are up.”

The newest concessions business at the airport is the Little Brass Café, a small business in the historic terminal operated by Samantha Argosino and her business

partner and husband, Anthony Arredondo. Argosino previously operated The Brass Lamp on the Promenade in Downtown Long Beach, which closed last year.

“After we closed we got a phone call from Seyed Jalali and John Keisler [from the city’s economic development department], and they asked if I’d be interested in opening here,” Argosino said. Arredondo, who had been working at Boeing for 17 years, quit his job to join Argosino in the new venture.

The Little Brass Café has been doing well so far with its offerings of sandwiches,

paninis, pastries and coffee, according to the couple. “We came up with several different sandwiches. And the fun thing for me was trying to name them in homage to Long Beach,” Arredondo said. The menu boasts items such as the “Retro Row Pesto” and “Daugherty Spicy Flyer.”

The Long Beach City Council approved plans for major airport improvements in May, and the execution of the contract for the work with Swinerton Builders is imminent, according to Romo. Regular meetings to prepare for groundbreaking on the improvements should begin in July, he said.

The first improvement planned is the construction of a new ticketing lobby behind the historic airport terminal, which in turn will become the counter area for rental car operations. The new ticketing lobby will function in a common use format. “Depending on who is using a gate or who needs the ticketing function at that time, they will allocate it to a specific carrier,” Romo explained.

The baggage claim areas are also slated to be consolidated into one space, which will enable the courtyard at the rear of the new ticketing lobby to be expanded, according to Romo. The enlarged courtyard will present new opportunities for pre-TSA area concessions accessible to travelers as well as airport employees and workers in the area, he noted. “We’re planning for everything to be finished within three years.” ■



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Long Beach Airport's Fred Peña Says Aloha To His 49-Year Aviation Career

■ By **BRANDON RICHARDSON**
SENIOR WRITER

After 49 years in the aviation industry, Fred Peña, the now-former manager of airport operations and facilities at Long Beach Airport (LGB), retired. Several months shy of his 68th birthday, Peña's last work day at the airport was May 31. The following morning, he and his wife, Kimberly, boarded Hawaiian Airlines' inaugural flight from LGB to Honolulu.

"This has come full circle for me because my first-ever plane ride was from Honolulu to Lihue on the island of Kauai on Hawaiian Airlines," Peña said while sitting in his boxed-up office on his final work day. "To be able to go back to Honolulu on Hawaiian Airlines, it just . . . there are a lot of emotions for me. I can't describe the feeling."

Jet fuel is in Peña's blood. His dad worked for Philippine Airlines before becoming a manager with Japan Airlines in Honolulu, where Peña is originally from. He said that, when he was a kid in the early 1950s, he loved going to work with his dad, standing by the fence and watching the planes arrive and depart. That is when he first caught the aviation bug, he reminisced.

After graduating from Damien Memorial High School in Honolulu, Peña attended Leeward Community College for a few years. In May 1969, while still attending college, Peña began working part time with Canadian Pacific Air Lines. This is when his real fascination with the industry set in and he never looked back.

Around 1980, Peña began working for Alaska Airlines in Burbank as a supervisor at both Burbank and Ontario airports. At the time, the airline was just making its way into Southern California, he explained, looking for underserved airports away from Los Angeles International Airport. This expansion ultimately led the airline to begin operating at LGB, where Peña was assigned as station manager in the summer of 1982.

From ticketing to baggage to catering, as station manager for Alaska, Peña oversaw it all at LGB. Much of the work was done by his own team; however, certain operations were conducted by vendors. Peña noted that ramp baggage handling was done by Airserv, which still operates at the airport today under President Kevin McAchren.

"I was a station manager here in Long Beach from 1982 to about 1995," Peña said. "We had to close the station here in Long Beach in the mid-1990s and I trans-



After 49 years in the aviation industry, Fred Peña, left, retired from Long Beach Airport, where he worked from 1982 to 1995 and again from 2002 to May 31, 2018, in various capacities. Peña is pictured in front of the historic terminal building with Airport Director Jess Romo on his last day of work. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Brandon Richardson)

ferred to Orange County at John Wayne Airport. That is where I closed out my [22-year] career with Alaska – I had the itch to try something new. I started with Long Beach Airport in June 2002."

Then-Airport Manager Chris Kunze reached out to Peña directly when the superintendent of operations position was opening up at LGB. After several years, he received a promotion to manager of facilities and building services. And finally, in December 2016, Peña was promoted to the last position he'd hold – manager of airport operations and facilities. For the last year and a half, he oversaw all facility maintenance and all operations at the airport – from safety and security to engineering to custodial staff.

Looking back at nearly 30 years at LGB, Peña explained that the best part was the people. "Everyone says 'the people,' but it's very true," he said. "I met a lot of nice colleagues and the passengers are always very nice here. And being part of the team on the development side and seeing improvements to the facilities to make the customer experience a lot better was great."

During his time at LGB, Peña saw the airport grow and evolve. He noted that when he first started there was a single terminal building, which stood where TSA and passenger screening are now. Years later, he was on site for the groundbreaking of the new terminal that allowed the airport to support more airlines. During his tenure at the airport, he witnessed many changes. He saw the construction of the parking structures. He was there for improvements

to runways and the terminals. He even saw the introduction of LGB's famous (or, to some, infamous) noise ordinance in 1995, as Alaska took part in lawsuits against the city throughout the 12-year process of raising a proposed daily flight cap from 15 to 41 commercial flights.

"I think I've forgotten most of the memorable stories from working here," Peña said with a chuckle. "The Virgin Orbit 747 that is out here now, that is really unique and I think it was fun to help them get on the field and make a home for them," he said, referring to the Boeing 747 to be used as a flying launchpad for Virgin Orbit's satellite rocket. "To continue the aerospace legacy that Long Beach has with Virgin Orbit . . . we are going into space from Long Beach. It's just quite a thing to see for me."

One of the most memorable and interesting missions he was tasked with during his time at LGB was hosting Air Force One shortly after President Barack Obama was elected, Peña recalled. He said it was a challenging but exciting undertaking to work through all the logistics and extra measures necessary to accommodate a presidential visit. But, through relationships with airport tenants and other entities, all the required space and equipment came together, and the experience was a success.

Peña developed several good working relationships that turned into lifelong friendships. One such friendship was with Randy Berg, who was hired as manager of airport operations and facilities when Alaska first transferred Peña to LGB. In 1984, a blimp

operator was hired to do work at the Los Angeles Olympics, Peña recalled. He explained that the operator, an Italian man with a heavy accent, was having trouble finding a place to park his blimp. After being booted from the military base in Los Alamitos, the operator decided to try his luck with Berg at LGB. Berg called a meeting the following day with the appropriate airport staff and city officials, but not before telling Peña about the situation.

"That night, Randy and I were having a 'debriefing' session – at the time, there was a nice lounge on the second floor of the terminal and we had reserved seats in the afternoon. I gave him an Italian 'phrase of welcome' and he wrote it down on an index card," Peña laughed. "The following day when he had their meeting, the pilot walked into the office and Randy threw out the phrase. The pilot asked him if he knew what it meant and Randy, with all these city people around him, said he thought he was saying hello and welcoming him. But no. I'll have to let you use your imagination from there, but the room cracked up. In the end, the airport was able to put the airship on the field and we all became very good friends with the pilot after that."

A while after that, Peña flew into LGB from a meeting in Seattle. Berg, along with the chief of security, met him on the tarmac and called him over to their car. When Peña stuck his head into the passenger window, he said Berg grabbed his neck tie, rolled the window up and proceeded to have the chief of security drive briskly up the tarmac – a silly revenge prank that still put a smile on Peña's face more than three decades later.

Falling into retirement head on, the couple's week-long trip to Honolulu from Long Beach is the first of many trips they plan to take. While Honolulu is one possibility for the couple to retire to, Peña said they are going to use their newfound freedom to travel the world. Tokyo, South and Central America and Europe are at the top of the list, Peña noted. He added that he has always wanted to take Kimberly and their two sons, Scott, 22, and Spencer, 29, to the Philippines, where his parents immigrated from.

"I'm a lifelong aviation nut, so even though I'm retiring, that doesn't mean that I'll be a stranger to airports," Peña said. "Besides the travel portion, I've always admired the volunteers that come out here and help the travelers. That is something I might be interested in doing. So, you may still see me around." ■

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