

DEL MAR LIGHTS UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Julie Maxey-Allison | 10th Street

Take a walkabout. Our Village businesses brightened the city with white window lights and eye catching decorations for this subdued 2020 holiday season. The inspiration from local volunteers brings extra cheer for visitors and residents to enjoy. The Del Mar Village Association, the Arts Advisory Committee and the Del Mar Foundation sponsored a juried competition for best decorated holiday windows in five categories. The winners: Most Traditional - Barton & Barton; Most Creative - Sandcastle Tales; Spirit of Del Mar - Berkshire Hathaway; Best Use of Merchandise - Frustrated Cowboy; Most Instagramable - Ranch & Coast Plastic Surgery Center;

plus one extra - Judges' Choice - Jolie Fleur. The prizes: First Prize Blue Ribbons presented by Mayor Haviland. The extra special windows showing colorful original art works on canvases by local school children from Del Mar Hills depicting ocean scenes, Del Mar Heights depicting dolphins, and the Winston School depicting winter scenes all got an Honorable Mention Certificate. Adding to the high spirits: Santa and reindeer riding high atop Stratford Square; the resplendent 15th Street community tree plus others in the Plaza and throughout the city; festively garlanded street lights; celebratory seasonal banners. Cheers! ■



Mayor Ellie Haviland award a Blue Ribbon to Barton & Barton for the Most Traditional.



*Barton & Barton's traditional display.
Photos Julie Maxey-Allison.*

more pictures on pages 6 and 7

COUNCIL-MANAGER MODEL

The governance system used by most California cities including Del Mar is known as the Council-Manager model. Governor Hiram Johnson and the early 20th century Progressive Movement encouraged California cities to resist the strong mayor model that was associated with the spoils system in many cities in the East. In essence it resembles the corporate model by the City Council hiring a professional manager to administer the vision, policies and budget adopted by the Council. The City Manager works for the Council and city employees work under the Manager. Put simply, the Council decides where to go, the Manager creates options for how to get there.

Over the years, Del Mar appears to have altered the model somewhat with more and more administrative decision making being escalated to the Council's agenda. Some of this comes from our tradition of very active citizen participation, creating a push for more tactical items to be decided by our Council. This creates two problems: too little reliance on staff member expertise and too little time for the Council to deliberate on policy and strategy. →

We encourage the Council and City Manager to discuss how to rebalance Council-Manager model.

Del Mar has always been fortunate to attract very talented staff members, partly because working in a small city gives them many opportunities to build their competencies working on a wide variety of issues instead of being "siloed" in narrow specialities. We could benefit more from staff capabilities by expecting them to carry out more functions without having to escalate operational matters to the Council agenda. Why use Council time on such items as replacing fire department radios, wordsmithing letters, dog park hours, tree maintenance, letter to state agency, temporary sign placement, contract for portable restroom services, accepting donations, public information contracts, etc. Of course staff could make such tactical decisions subject to oversight by the City Manager who is accountable to the Council. Council Members too often use meeting time to dig into details and complexities of governmental regulations that have already been thoroughly researched by staff members with expertise. More respect for staff competence would lead to more deliberation on policy and strategic direction.

Navigating Del Mar's future progress could benefit from freeing up more time for the Council to engage in strategic planning about how to handle major challenges and finding creative opportunities. We face many daunting existential challenges involving our bluffs, sea level rise, climate change, fire exposure, dangerous train tracks, business health, affordable housing stock, and financial stability. Some of these are local issues but most involve gaining cooperation from public and private entities outside of our borders. Our Council Members need to have time and energy to exert our interests in these larger arenas.

This is a good time to think big about our future and how to get there. □



non-profit. Its purpose is to advocate the Del Mar Community Plan, to foster informed public and government decision-making regarding issues affecting the community of the City of Del Mar, and to encourage a social and political climate favorable to the protection of the community character of the City of Del Mar and its environs.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Material submitted must include the writer's name, street address, and phone number, and should not exceed 400 words.

Contact us via e-mail or post at:

The Sandpiper, Box 2177, Del Mar, CA 92014
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VACCINE VIEW

Don Mosier, PhD, MD

The bad news is that the COVID-19 epidemic is spreading rapidly here in San Diego as well as across the nation, with some local hospitals reaching capacity in their intensive care units. The good news is that two COVID-19 vaccines have shown very promising results as their large, phase 3 trials near completion, in part because the raging epidemic has allowed protection against symptomatic infection to be discerned more rapidly.

The two vaccines are both based on messenger RNA (mRNA) that codes for the viral spike protein required for the virus to enter human cells. The BNT162 vaccine from Pfizer/BioNTech and the mRNA-1273 from Moderna both protected almost 95% of trial recipients against symptomatic virus infection (up to 50% of infections, particularly in younger subjects, are asymptomatic) and had no severe cases in any vaccine recipients. Both vaccines require two doses, and protection in the Pfizer/BioNTech trial was assessed 7 days after the second dose and 28 days after the first dose. The Moderna trial gave the second dose 29 days after the first and assessed protection 14 days later. Neither vaccine caused serious side effects, but both caused local soreness, some low-grade fever, headaches, and lethargy, much like other licensed vaccines. Both vaccine manufacturers have applied for emergency use authorization from the Food and Drug Administration which, if approved, would result in front-line medical personnel receiving shots in December.

These are the first two mRNA vaccines to have advanced this close to clinical use. Because mRNA is both unstable and subject to degradation by the enzyme RNase, the mRNA must be protected in proprietary liposome formulations (essentially encapsulated in fatty bubbles). The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine needs to be stored in ultracold freezers (-94° F.) until just before administration. The Moderna vaccine is reported to be more stable at normal freezer temperatures and can even last a few days in a refrigerator. Scaling up vaccine production is a technical challenge, and widespread distribution of either vaccine is not expected until April or May of next year, assuming there are no delayed side effects or new evidence that immunity is short lasting. There are currently over 50 over COVID-19 vaccines in various stages of development, so it is extremely likely that other vaccine formulations will be available sometime in 2021. Astra-Zeneca reported promising results on November 23rd.

With so many of our citizens refusing to wear masks, is it probable that they may also refuse to take an effective vaccine? Current polling suggests, unfortunately, that the answer is yes. Vaccines and mask wearing have been politicized and trust in federal regulatory bodies is at an all-time low. While there now appears to be light at the end of the tunnel, it will be dim indeed unless we listen to public health professionals and trust their advice. □

ECO HOLIDAYS!

Valérie Dufort | Klish Way

As we get ready for a once-in-a-century holiday season, many wonder how celebrations will be impacted without the potluck parties, the travels to visit extended family, and the gatherings that last late into the night. For many, the pandemic has affected habits that were once environmentally conscious choices. As the winds of hope breeze upon the world with the approach of 2021, why not go back to our earth saving habits, starting with offering ecofriendly presents?

You will find below a few suggestions that go beyond the reusable straws and shopping bags. You can find them at local stores, such as Jimbo's, Whole Foods, Earthwell Refills, People's Organic Food Market Coop, or online. Etsy.com and Amazon are good websites to look for:

- Gift wrap: Replace the disposable gift wrap with a piece of fabric, knotted or folded to give a distinguished look to your presents. Re-using paper grocery bags also makes for a great canvas to draw upon or paint holiday patterns and wrap presents.
- Makeup remover pads: Made out of bamboo or soft cotton, they are gentler than most of their disposable cousins.
- Hair care bars: Shampoo and conditioner don't have to come in a bottle. Their close relatives in bar form clean and condition just like the bottled products!
- Unpaper towels: I am proud to say that my family has eliminated paper towels from our household! How? By purchasing thick, heavy duty fabric wipes. We stack them up and simply reach for one, as we would reach for a disposable paper towel, and toss it in the laundry basket afterwards. Only when using unpaper towels, we save a tree!
- Bathroom upgrade: During the pandemic, many of us are improving the comfort of our home. We could each save a tree every few years if we adopted the French invention: the bidet (also called washlet or bidet seat).
- Composting, lazy style: What if I told you that you could compost quickly without fear of flies, smell, or having to mix and aerate your pile? An electric composter is a faster solution to traditional composting. Depending on the model you select, it takes a few hours or up to a week to dehydrate food scraps and grind them down into a rich fertilizer ready to be tossed into the garden. A few brands to look into are Vitamix Food Cycler, Compostology, Zera, and Biocompet.

Eco Holidays! □



Photo Virginia Lawrence

WEARING MASKS IS THE BEST VACCINE!

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

2020 was a year like no other – a few months of “normal” quickly pivoted to a “new normal” that called for rapid response to emerging needs and changing conditions brought on by the Covid-19 crisis. Our focus: to offer key activities in safe ways, and to sustain our community through difficult times with a robust grants program.

Our grants funded DMCC’s driver program for safe delivery of essentials to seniors, supported St. Peter’s Helping Hands food program, and supported DMVA’s Fuel the Frontline program. Special grants like these totaled over \$75,000.

When we realized the direness of the City’s financial situation, we worked quickly to evaluate priority items that had to be cut from the City’s budget, and granted \$180,820 to restore funding for specific items that are within our mission, and that support the health and safety of our citizens, community involvement in civic affairs, and residents’ quality of life. We funded fire fighter turnout gear, Beach Safety Center capital improvements, lifeguard support (training; patrol vehicle), the project to extend River Path Del Mar from Grand Ave Overlook to Crest Canyon, and more.

DMF’s First Thursdays and Bluegrass and Beyond programs offered diverse performances early in the year, including jazz, classical, Americana, and bluegrass. After March, First Thursdays took the form of: curated programs with video links, distributed by email, and a live performance streamed to an online audience, with artists in isolation rooms in studio.

DMF Talks found a temporary home on Zoom, with topics ranging from Keeping Our Oceans Healthy (Dr. Octavio Aburto, SIO) to how fruit fly experiments at the International Space Station are advancing human cardiovascular treatment (Dr. Karen Occor).

Other special events included a Virtual Coffee with Sheriff’s Captain Herbert Taft, plus support for holiday canvases painted by school groups to decorate downtown windows.

Young Del Mar: Kid-friendly events included A social-distanced Easter event with Easter-themed decorations placed outdoors for discovery on family walks, and an Expressive Arts Youth Workshop, held online.

DMF is a community foundation powered by committed volunteers and generous donors. To our donors and volunteers, we extend our heartfelt thanks for going the extra mile to help our community thrive in such a challenging year! Best wishes to all for safe and happy holidays, and here’s to 2021! ■

NUKE WASTE

Too Close for Comfort

Don Mosier | Rimini Road

The Samuel Lawrence Foundation sponsored a webinar by Professor Ian Fairlie on October 19th entitled “Is It Safe to Live Near The San Onofre Nuclear Power Station?” Here are some highlights from the presentation. Some are well known, others less so.

First, the well-known:

- Spent fuel rods should be stored in thick cast iron canisters (as in Europe), not the thin -walled stainless steel Holtec canisters being used. This decision placed lower cost above greater safety.
- There continue to be releases of radioactive material into the ocean, although the exact amount is difficult to ascertain. Surfers should go elsewhere for at least 3 days after each release.

Now, the less well-known:

- Discharges of tritium (^3H) into the air continue at the rate of 25 Curies/year. This is an enormous amount of radioactivity and ^3H is an isotope that is readily incorporated into the food chain. For comparison, 25 curies are equivalent to 10^{14} dental X-rays (that’s 10 with 14 zeros).
- Because of this known discharge of radioactivity as well as exposure data from European studies of those living near nuclear power stations, Professor Fairlie suggests that living within 3 miles of San Onofre power station is inadvisable for women of childbearing age, young children, and that no food grown within that radius should be consumed.
- Professor Fairlie was particularly critical of the decision to place the Poseidon desalination plant in Carlsbad so close to the discharge pipes from San Onofre. The reverse osmosis treatment to get rid of the ocean salt will actually concentrate tritium and other radioactive isotopes in the water. The coastal currents usually flow from south to north, but not always.
- He was also critical of the absence of any emergency evacuation plan or any provision of potassium iodide tablets to protect against release of radioactive iodine.

A final anecdote was telling for the future of storing radioactive waste in the U.S. Finland is building an underground waste repository called Onkalo at a projected cost of greater than \$5 billion, which is way more than the cost of the electricity generated during the operating life of their nuclear power stations. This is like buying a new car for \$25,000, driving it for 20 years, and then paying \$100,000 to have it scrapped. Maybe not a sound investment! ■

ROVING TEEN REPORTER

Distance Learning ?

Neha Pubbi | Torrey Pines High School Senior

Students are adapting to a substantial change in learning and teaching as most San Diego School Districts have shifted to online distance learning due to the pandemic.

While adapting, students discovered some advantages of distance learning. “There is definitely a lot more freedom with distance learning. You’re not confined to staying on campus and there is a lot more things you can do at home like getting food in between classes,” Annabelle Wang, a junior at Westview, said.

Some of the challenges of distance learning are isolation, focusing on a computer screen for hours, and lack of instant accessibility to teachers. “Kids aren’t as engaged, it’s harder to ask teacher questions, and it is not healthy staring at a screen all day,” Anna Ybarrola, a senior at TPHS, said.

For others the absence of the social aspect that comes with in person learning has been the biggest drawback. “I miss seeing my friends at school and going to football games,” Riley Testa, a sophomore at TPHS, said.

Many students have consciously made efforts to counteract the hours of screen time. “I make sure to get up, move around, go outside, and not look at my phone or computer during breaks between classes,” Ybarrola said.

Students have adapted their studying habits to adjust with the online learning model. “You end up doing a lot of the work yourself. You read the chapters and textbook, take the assessments, and don’t learn much,” Wang said.

One of the major concerns with the remote learning model is ensuring there are no gaps in learning. “Last year abruptly going online, I believe there was learning loss, but now it is the same amount of information as in person,” Testa said.

However, students feel differently about the quality of education with distance learning. “I don’t think it is the same quality of learning. Right now I’m learning to pass the next exam, and then it is in one ear and out the other,” Wang said.

Students understand the challenges that come with a pandemic, like changing what school entails and they understand that the school districts are dealing with the uncertainty of these times. “Considering the current situation, the district has handled it pretty well, there is a lot of uncertainty to deal with,” Ybarrola said.

As the pandemic forces change, students are adapting to challenges and making the best of the new distance learning model. ■



Del Mar Community Connections
Supporting and Serving Seniors

DECEMBER 2020

Ashley Simpkins | Program Director

Celebrate the Holidays with DMCC

Just because we can’t gather, that doesn’t mean we can’t celebrate the holidays together! On Friday, December 4, DMCC will be hosting a drive-thru holiday party at the Del Mar Civic Center. We’ve planned to serve apple cider, enjoy live Christmas music, distribute gifts, and quite a few other surprises. Attendance is free, but reservations are required for a half hour timeslot between the hours of 10am – 2pm. Call (858) 792-7565 to learn more.

Thanks and Giving

During Thanksgiving week, DMCC delivered “Thankful boxes” – single serving heat-and-eat meals made by a local catering company – to senior addresses throughout Del Mar. Some seniors ordered the boxes for themselves so that they wouldn’t have to face the prospect of making a full Thanksgiving meal when they may be separated from family this year. Some boxes were subsidized by DMCC and included with a beautiful bouquet of roses because the recipients are already enrolled in DMCC services. We are grateful for the partnership of the Del Mar Foundation and the Del Mar Rose Society, who helped to make Thanksgiving truly special for DMCCers.



DMCC’s Amanda Allen delivers a happy Thanksgiving to Irene Russell. Photo Kara Adams

Volunteer of the Month – December

DMCC’s Volunteer of the Month for December 2020 is Nina Wright, volunteer driver and all-around great member of the team, because she works hard to pay it forward. Thank you, Nina!

DMCC programs and services depend on our incredible volunteers! To learn more about Nina or becoming a volunteer driver, visit dmcc.cc/volunteerofthemoth.

For more information... or to join our email list:

Please visit our website at dmcc.cc, or contact the DMCC office at (858) 792-7565 or dmcc@dmcc.cc. ■

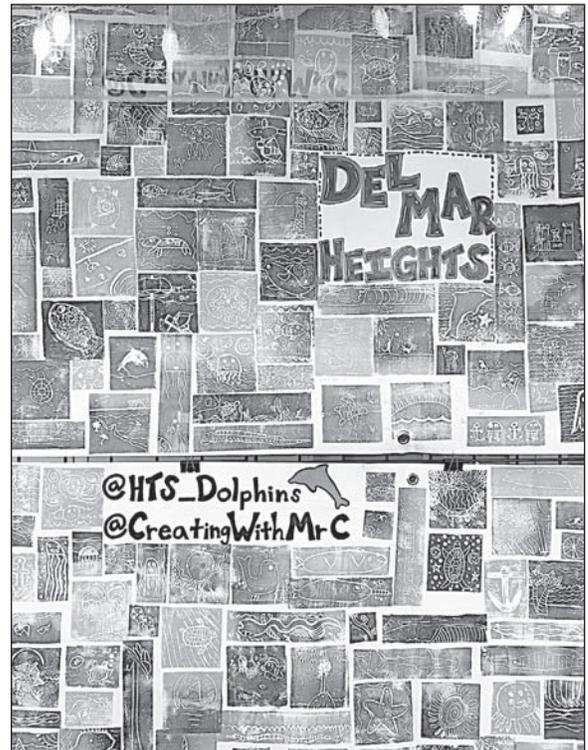
DEL MAR LIGHTS UP FOR THE HOLIDAYS



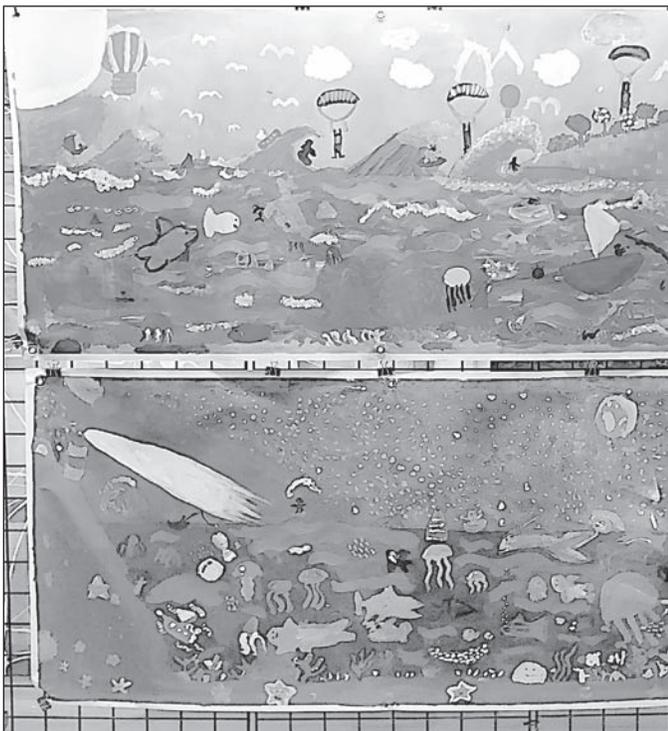
Santa and reindeer riding high atop Stratford Square. All photos Julie Maxey-Allison.



Mayor Haviland in front of Rusty's display of Winston School poster of winter scenes which was awarded Honorable Mention.



Honorable Mention Del Mar Heights School.



Honorable Mention Del Mar Hills School.



Mayor Haviland in front of Berkshire Hathaway, winner for Spirit of Del Mar.



Mayor Haviland inside Sandcastle Tales, Blue Ribbon Winner of the Most Creative.



Mayor Haviland outside of Ranch and Coast Plastic Surgery, Blue Ribbon for Most Instagramable.



Jolie Fleur - Judges' Choice/no ribbon but a trophy that will be passed along to the next year's winner.

LES BEAUX ARTS EN VILLE

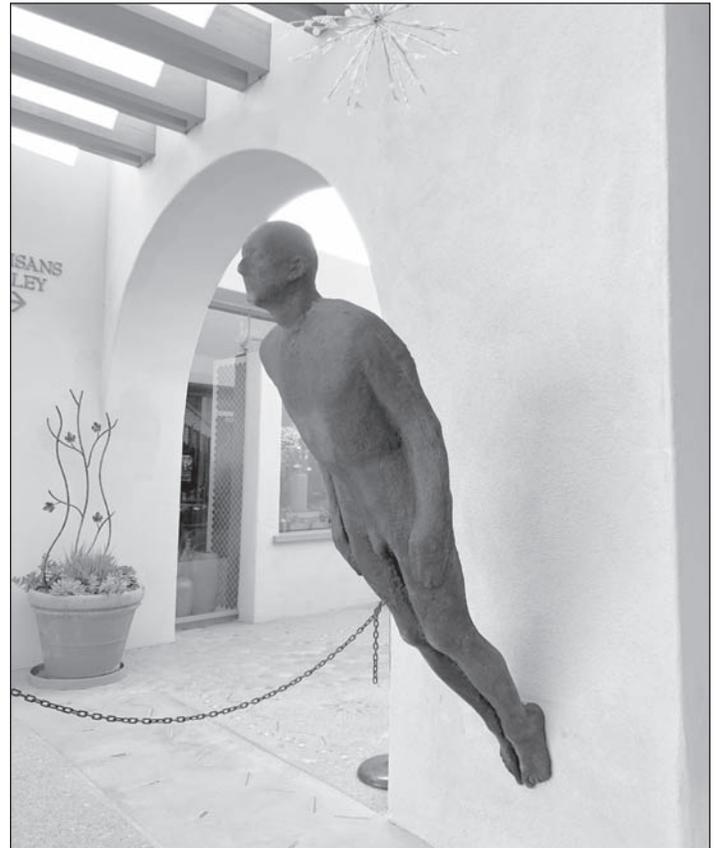
Photos Julie Maxey-Allison

NEW ART



Del Mar Fine Art Investments: An Alexander Salazar Gallery.

NEW ART



*Nude Descending a Wall in the Plaza.
Cast iron sculpture by Antony Gormley called LEVER II.*

HOUSING MANOEUVRES

Ann Gardner | Via Latina



Businesses along Jimmy Durante Blvd in the North Commercial Zone. Photo Ann Gardner.

As we go to press over 600 signatures on a local referendum petition are being reviewed by the County Registrar of Voters to determine if 345 of those signatures are registered to vote in Del Mar. If verified, the incoming Council must determine whether to repeal the current Council's 3-2 decision on October 5th that allows additional housing in the North Commercial Zone at Jimmy Durante and San Dieguito Drive, or put the decision to a public vote. In the mean time the decision is suspended.

The October 5th 3 to 2 decision enabled the City to meet its Fifth Cycle (2013-2021) Housing Element objective to enact policies that encourage the construction of 22 affordable housing units as part of Del Mar's commitment to ease California's housing crises, especially for lower income families. On September 30th the City had already received a letter from the California Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department warning that despite numerous warnings Del Mar "has failed to implement program actions included in our 5th Cycle Element and this failure ...has brought the City out of substantial compliance with California's Housing element Law" and subject to enforcement penalties including "by right" development that eliminates local review.

A local referendum allows voters to reject legislation that has been enacted by a City Council if 10 percent of the registered voters of that City sign a valid petition protesting adoption of an ordinance. If verified, the effective date of the ordinance is suspended and the City Council must either repeal the ordinance, or submit it for voter approval (the next general election is November, 2022). The incoming City Council, with two (Haviland and Parks choosing not to run again) of the three approving the ordinance no longer on the Council, will make that decision. A transition meeting for the new City Council is scheduled for December 7. →

WRESTLING WITH THE STATE

Betty Wheeler | Seaview Avenue

The City's ongoing effort to avoid penalties for violating State housing law has resulted in a conditional reprieve based on a December 4 letter from the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). That letter referred to HCD's Sept. 30 finding that Del Mar "no longer complied with State Housing Element Law...due to long passed deadlines regarding zoning actions and the lack of appropriate action at the City's September 8, 2020 City Council meeting." [At that meeting, a key step to rezone North Commercial, which required a 4-1 supermajority, failed by a 3-2 vote, with Druker and Gaasterland voting no.] HCD gave the City an opportunity to respond to its Sept. 30 finding, and the City responded with a letter outlining progress in implementing key portions of Del Mar's certified Housing Element: the rezoning of North Commercial (2-E), Professional Commercial (2-F), and Watermark (2-G). HCD's Dec. 4 letter noted that the City's response "outlines progress in implementing Programs 2-E, 2-F and, most importantly, 2-G . . . and crucially describes all actions are being taken to make the site available for development at appropriate densities. . . ." HCD's letter concluded that "Given the City's commitment and schedule, HCD will not, at this time, take additional actions." That reprieve was conditioned on progress and monthly reporting: "any deviation, lack of progress or other actions that influence the effective and timely implementation of Program 2-G . . . will trigger an immediate review and potential action by HCD. Finally, the City must report progress in implementation monthly. . . ." Specifically, actions to implement Program 2-G must be taken prior to April 15, 2021. The City Council has already authorized up to \$40,000 for the environmental review necessary for Program 2-G. This is good news, in that the City avoids immediate penalties, and HCD has drawn clear lines for achieving compliance, and has made it clear what the City must to do avoid penalties and other action, such as referral to the State Attorney General.

Please note: The HDC letter to the Del Mar City Manager may be viewed on the Sandpiper website. ▣

Of the five, Deputy Mayor Gaasterland and recently reelected Councilmember Druker had voted against the ordinance and Druker had discussed the idea of waiting until after the November Council election to determine the amount of units saying "I believe it should be residential but am dead set against the concept of 20 units per acre." Of the newly elected council members, Tracey Martinez and Dan Quirk, Martinez ran on a platform that included the "need to assemble an alternative to up-zoning the entire NC zone and present that alternative to the (California) Housing and Community Development." The earliest a

continued bottom next page

BEACH BIRD

Julie Maxey-Allison | 10th Street

They are still here, right on the beach, albeit fewer than in the flurry of the summer season. Our California Gulls, *Larus Californicus*, don't take off with other migrating birds in the winter. They stick around, always on the lookout for the possibility of their favorite, French fries, crisp and fresh from your, or anyone else's, picnic. Ever opportunistic, these foragers do, however, settle for less as they hunt for food on foot, from the air, and/or into the water.

Even in winter they are part of the beach sport "catch-me-if-you-can" played by toddlers and young children who can't resist going after the gulls in a full-on chase, surfing the sand in a mighty effort to catch one. The gulls enjoy the game, gliding just out of reach, repeating the retreat each time a pursuer gets close. What would the youngsters do if indeed they managed to grab a gull?

These sociable California Gulls mix not only with beach goers but with the many other species in the gull family that stop in along the coast. Our locals can be identified by their white heads, dark eyes, gray backs, with a bit of color for show via their yellow legs. They breed in inland lakes and rivers, both parents stay together to take turns incubating their eggs. They can live a long life. One of the oldest California Gulls on record was 28 when caught in 2013. It had been banded in 1985.

Young gulls start out a mottled brown and white color with pale faces, their bills and legs pinkish. As they grow their backs go gray as their legs turn bluish before their final yellow tint at about three years on. After the juveniles perfect their strong and nimble flying their next task is to master the skill of catching things in midair. They practice this trick by dropping a stick and swooping down to catch it. That may have been the inspiration for the book *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, a fable about a seagull more interested in learning about life and flight than eating, popular in the 1970s. A noble thought. Still, best to protect your French fries. ■

FROM HOUSING MANOEUVRES *page 8*

decision on whether to repeal the referendum or submit for voter approval is estimated to be at the January 11 Council meeting.

The Council and the City have little time to find alternatives to the current North Commercial zoning ordinance #973 that are acceptable to HCD and the community, and most importantly provide opportunities for the 14 or so additional units needed to meet our affordable housing goals. The deadline for implementing our Fifth Cycle Housing Element commitments is April 21, 2021. ■

IN BRIEF

Gun Show Gone

The Crossroads of the West Gun Show scheduled for mid-December has been cancelled due to the current restrictions to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The state bill to prevent additional gun shows at the Del Mar fairgrounds takes effect January 1st, so there may be no more gun shows if this bill survives legal challenges.

Watermark Going Up

On November 24, Kitchell filed its development application for Watermark with the City. The application appears to be consistent with what they described in their earlier red dot: 48 units, including 10 affordable units, 3 stories in some sections, protection of wetlands and bluff/slope. The application is filed pursuant to SB 330, which allows "by right" development under certain circumstances. Filing of the application triggers certain rights and time "clocks," and determination by staff that the application is complete would trigger additional rights and time constraints. For our earlier reporting on this issue, see the cover story of our Oct. 2020 issue. ■

FENCING WITH THE CCC

Don Mosier | Rimini Road

The California Coastal Commission (CCC) sent a strongly worded letter to the North Coast Transportation District (NCTD) on October 15th objecting to the unilateral decision by NCTD to end its cooperation with the CCC on transportation projects in the San Diego region (the text of the letter is available on the Sandpiper website).

The letter notes that the CCC has cooperated with NCTD and the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) on at least 28 railroad projects in the past, and CCC believes that those projects were made better by their environmental review. In no case has CCC objected to any consistency certifications, in particular, there has been concurrence with all four projects involving stabilization of the Del Mar Bluffs.

The issue of the proposed fence in Del Mar was directly addressed in the letter. To quote, "It came as a complete surprise to learn of NCTD's proposal to unilaterally proceed with a project to fence the Del Mar bluffs without any state or local review." "Setting aside any legal issues raised here, we believe that this is simply bad public policy and hope that the NCTD board will reconsider its position." ■

CITY FINANCIAL UPDATE

Tom McGreal | Stratford Court

In October the Finance Committee and the City Council reviewed the preliminary annual results for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2020 and the First Quarter estimates for fiscal year 2021 covering the three months ended September 30, 2020.

As you know the City Council made budget cuts earlier this year in response to the expected revenue impacts of Covid – 19. In April the City cut the fiscal year 2020 budget by \$3 million (fiscal year ending June 30, 2020) and then in June the City cut the fiscal year 2021 budget by \$4 million (year ending June 30, 2021).

Although the audit of the FY 2020 results is still underway, the Preliminary FY 2020 results show that revenues exceeded the Covid budget by \$234,329, Expenses came in below the Covid Budget by \$132,471, and the Capital and Special projects cost \$196,800 less than expected. As a result, the General Fund Reserves finished the year \$640,000 higher than expected. The Contingency Reserve is \$2.5 million or 17.38% (63 days of operations). Measure Q Reserves ended the year with \$1.2 million. These are good results compared to the Covid budget estimates.

The FY 2021 Covid Budget review was very challenging given the uncertain timeframe for an economic recovery from the ongoing pandemic. Ultimately, cuts were made across the budget with \$1.6 million reduction in Operating expenses including \$1 million in employee layoffs and concessions, the deferral of all non-essential Capital and Special projects totaling \$1 million, and the reduction of Reserves in the amount of \$1.4 million from the original adopted budget. City Council also decided to place all Measure Q Projects on hold pending further review later in the year.

Based upon the very preliminary 1st Quarter FY 2021 estimates, the City is on track to achieve the FY2021 Covid Budget with some minor expenditure adjustments and several unexpected donations from the Del Mar Foundation, the Rotary Club and an anonymous donor. As a result, the Contingency Reserve will total \$2.1 million or 14.6% (53 days of operations) and the Economic Uncertainty Reserve was increased to \$300,000. Measure Q Reserves are expected to finish the year at \$2.2 million.

The next chance to review financial results will be in February 2021 when the six-month results become available. The City's biggest challenge stems from the current spike in Covid cases and the worrisome expectations that this will get worse going into the winter months. The economy will not return to normal until Covid is under control and while the prospect of a vaccine is encouraging, the timetable for economic recovery remains very uncertain.

What does all this mean for the City?

The City has taken the necessary budget actions, but given the outlook for the pandemic there is a significant →

FAIR FINANCE FEARS

Fairgrounds – hanging on by a thread

Jay Thomas | Bellaire Street & Jim Benedict | Christie Lane

The 22nd Agricultural District has very-serious financial issues and are on the brink of imploding. One of the leading sources of income for the City of Del Mar is the tax revenue from the fairgrounds and the racetrack. Our city took a big hit in 2020 and this could carry over into 2021 and possibly for several years to come.

What is going to happen next, and how did we get here?

Background - The 22nd Agricultural District is the largest county fair in the state and is a self-funded enterprise reporting to the California Dept. of Food & Agriculture (CDFA). It is completely reliant on income generated from the fairgrounds including the racetrack and the horse park east of the freeway. The 22nd board of directors including an appointee representing Del Mar and others are appointed by the governor. Other than the local board member this is a “pay-to-play” board with the average political contribution to the governor of about \$30,000 (a big part of the problem in our opinion).

What is happening right now - Through September 30th, the Ag District has lost \$10.4 million this year. Due to the cancellation of the San Diego County Fair, staffing was reduced from 153 to 62 in October. This was a long process as the state mandated a six-month notice to the affected civil servants most of whom were unionized. The District has less than one month's cash on hand for a payroll that now exceeds this amount coupled with unpaid vendors invoices. They have requested \$12 million from the state to fund operations through June of 2021. Without this funding the District will need to lay off the remainder of its employees in the next month or two leaving close to \$65 million in debt obligations (Racetrack Authority Debt and other debts taken on for the new concert venue) and almost \$35 million of unfunded pension, medical retiree, and paid

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risk that more will have to be done. Prudent financial management dictates that the City develop a contingency plan now that models further revenue impacts from Covid and sets trigger points for specific budget actions.

Here are some of the key questions that should be addressed in this planning process. How severely could an extended pandemic impact revenue? What level of operational spending is sustainable in declining revenue scenarios? How would these scenarios impact important Capital projects? When will reserves reach dangerously low levels if spending isn't reduced fast enough? What is the effect on service levels in each scenario?

Doing contingency planning now will position the City to be ready to react quickly with well thought out actions. Prepare for the worst, but hope for the best! ■

WELCOME, SHAWNA!

Jeff Barnouw | Amphitheatre Drive

Shawna Anderson was unanimously named Executive Director of the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority at the JPA Board meeting on November 20. She had acted as Interim Executive Director since Kevin McKernan stepped down in September. Most important she had been the Principal Planner for the Park since 2000, a key figure in the Park's remarkable development.



Courtesy Shawna Anderson

One of her major accomplishments is so recent that it wasn't included in her application. Largely through her persistent efforts the Park just received a grant of \$1.39 million from the California Recreational Trails and Greenways Program for a one-mile segment of the Coast to Crest Trail including a bridge over the San Dieguito River in the Fairbanks Ranch area. It will link 4 miles of existing trail along the Lagoon and by the Horse Park to a segment in the Santa Fe Valley. The grant covers design, permitting, and construction. The bridge will be similar to the one in Del Dios Gorge west of Lake Hodges Dam that is visible from Del Dios Highway.

Shawna lives in Mission Hills with her husband, a private consultant in urban planning, and two grown children, 18 and 22. Appropriately she likes to hike and thinks her new position will get her away from the desk and out onto the trails even more than before, since she wants to stay in touch with staff and public, with what's going on in the Park. The Park is experiencing increased popularity because of the pandemic. A second major phase of the Lagoon Restoration in the area west of El Camino Real and north of the Dust Devil Nature Trail, which Shawna helped plan, is set to begin construction in Fall 2021. ■

FROM FAIR FINANCE FEARS *page 10*

leave obligations to the state who owns the property.

What's next? - We can only look into our crystal ball. But all options do not look very positive. One thing is clear; the 22nd Ag District was ill prepared to deal with the Covid-19 crisis which obliterated its business model. Given that the pandemic crisis is not going away in the near future it is certain the district will fail unless the state bails them out. There are examples of other business models that could work for the prize piece of property that is a big part of the City of Del Mar, but this will take time and require a relook at how the state will want this property to operate in the future. Stay tuned..... ■

AN OPEN INVITATION

The Sandpiper reserved this space for each of the three candidates who won election (or re-election) to Council last month (Dave Druker, Tracy Martinez, and Dan Quirk) to share their top three priorities for the coming year. The response from Councilmember Druker, on behalf of all three, is published below. The articles referred to in his email can be viewed online at bit.ly/BiggerWatermark and bit.ly/NCTD-Reps.

• **Nov. 6, 2020 from Don Mosier**

Dear Tracy, Dan and Dave,

Congratulations on your campaign victories. May I request that each of you submit a 300-word article outlining your top 3 priorities for the coming year and how you hope to accomplish them. Text is due by November 25th.

Thanks for your service to Del Mar.

• **Nov. 7, 2020 from Dave Druker**

Dear Don,

Thank you for your offer. I have conferred with Tracy and Dan. We all agree that unless the Sandpiper retracts the misleading articles (NCTD and Watermark) about Terry and me, each of us will not write an article for the Sandpiper.

• **Nov. 8, 2020 from Don Mosier**

Dave, Dan and Tracy,

The election is over and you have won. It is time to put differences of opinion (and fact) behind us and move on.

The Sandpiper stands by its reporting. Dave, you had a chance to comment on the NCTD article and chose not to respond. If you want to submit a letter to the editor stating your view, we will publish it without edits.

I expected a response from each of you as independent elected officials. Neither Tracy nor Dan were mentioned in the articles concerning Dave, so it is a surprise to me that you have agreed to a coordinated response. The Sandpiper request was an opportunity for you to further introduce yourselves to the community and showcase your agenda once you are sworn in. It appears that you have missed that opportunity.

The Sandpiper welcomes contributions from our elected officials, and we hope that each of our councilmembers will share their plans and opinions with our readers. ■

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DATED MATERIAL

CECILIA ROUSE

Home Town Pride

Penny Abell | Serpentine Drive

President-elect Biden's announcement that Cecilia Rouse will be nominated as Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors in the new administration sent currents of excitement, pride, and nostalgia among many of us in Del Mar. Ceci's family was deeply embedded in the community for many years.

Her father, Carl Rouse, was the first African-American to earn a PhD in physics from Caltech. He worked for many years on various projects for General Atomics while devoting his nights to his first love, solar physics. Her mother, Lorraine Rouse, worked as a school psychologist, held at least three Master's degrees and was engaged in numerous community building activities. These included sitting on the Design Review and Friends of the River Valley boards, getting DMCC's social service programs started and co-founding the Del Mar Farmers Market.

The Rouse children Forrest, Carolyn and Cecilia grew up with their friends in Del Mar schools and graduated from Torrey Pines High School. Forrest, with his physics PhD went into industry, while the girls chose the academic life, Carolyn earning a Ph.D in Anthropology and Ceci a Ph.D in Economics. Eventually they became the first sisters tenured at Princeton University. It was painful for their many friends in Del Mar when the elder Rouses decided to relocate to Princeton to be close to their daughters and their families.

Carolyn and Cecilia have built distinguished academic careers. Carolyn is Chair of the Anthropology Department



Torrey Pines High School Graduate Cecilia Rouse nominated as Chair Of the Council of Economic Advisors in the Biden administration.

at Princeton and Cecilia is Dean of the Princeton School of Public and International Policy. In an earlier Princeton interview both talked about getting inspiration from their parents for researching difficult issues. "We're just cheap knockoffs..." one said. We disagree and congratulate Cecilia and the whole family on her nomination and look forward to her putting her extensive research on labor economics with a focus on the economics of education, to work in her new position. From the White House website:

"The Council of Economic Advisors, an agency within the Executive Office of the President, is charged with offering the President objective economic advice on the formulation of both domestic and international economic policy. The Council bases its recommendation and analysis on economic research and empirical evidence, using the best data available to support the President in setting our nation's economic policy." ■