

# Sandpiper

DEL MAR'S COMMUNITY JOURNAL

Volume 30 Number 2

March 2026

## STR GREEN LIGHT

by Dwight Worden | Seaview Avenue

After years of work by successive City Councils to gain approval for a regulatory framework for short-term rentals (STRs) in Del Mar, a recent flurry of actions means that the City's STR regulations will now go into full force and effect, with the STR permit application period opening on March 2.

The key approval came on February 5, when the California Coastal Commission approved the STR ordinance/Local Coastal Program Amendment (LCPA) without modifications, by a 7-2 vote. A motion to reduce the minimum STR stay from 3 to 2 days failed. Just before taking up Del Mar's LCPA, the CCC voted to lower the Encinitas minimum STR stay to 2 days, but Del Mar Principal Planner Amanda Lee made a convincing argument that Del Mar's circumstances justify a different result, given that hotel rooms within a 5-mile radius of Del Mar outnumber homes in Del Mar.

On February 3, in anticipation of the CCC approval, the Council established a 60-day STR permit application period that will begin on March 2 and end on May 1. Council adoption of a fee schedule for STR permits on February 17 was the final action needed to launch the program.

The ordinance has a cap of 129 STRs (5% of the dwelling units in Del Mar based on the 2020 Census). The 129 units are allocated by area as follows: 60% in the North Beach area, 25% in the South Beach area, and 15% in the Hills area. However, the ordinance also allows for the cap to be temporarily exceeded in order to accommodate STRs that existed before the STR ordinance was adopted. To qualify, these "existing STRs" were required to submit registry applications by Dec. 31, 2024. Through this registry process, the City verified 150 existing STRs.

If these 150 existing STRs apply for permits under the new regulations, they will all be accommodated, but no additional STR permits will be issued until the total number of STR permits falls below 129, and the cap of 129 will be in place thereafter. In the meantime, those seeking a permit for a new STR can be waitlisted.

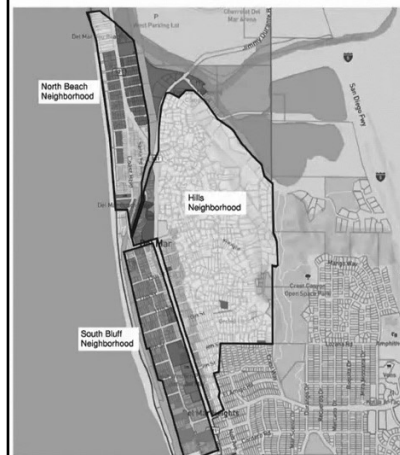
Importantly, the stated objectives of the STR ordinance not only include accommodating

short-term visitor uses, but also serving the City's need to maintain its long-term housing stock, to comply with its State-mandated housing obligations driven by the housing crisis; and to comply with the Community Plan's objective to maintain Del Mar's special residential character, in part by separating commercial and residential uses.

The ordinance specifically refers to Coastal Commission "policy guidance to limit new short term rentals to primary residences," and only the existing STRs will be exempt from the requirement that STRs must be in a "primary residence," that is, one that serves as a primary residence for more than 6 months of the year. New STRs will be limited to one per owner, and have other restrictions that do not apply to the initially-permitted existing STRs.

The Council-adopted fees for STRs are \$815 for the initial STR Permit application fee (permit valid for 2 years) and a \$598 bi-annual renewal fee. The fee structure is intended to fully fund the cost of administering the STR program, including permit processing, specialized software costs, TOT remittance processing, monitoring, enforcement, and a 24-hour complaint hotline. □

### 150 Existing STRs – Three Main Neighborhoods



**North Beach - 94 Existing STRs (63%)**

**South Bluff - 31 Existing STRs (20%)**

**Hills - 25 Existing STRs (17%)**

The 150 existing STRs by neighborhood (from the Feb. 5, 2026 presentation to the CCC by Amanda Lee, Principal Planner, City of Del Mar).

## WE ARE ALL MINNEAPOLIS

No, we do not yet have masked federal agents storming Del Mar neighborhoods. But we are affected in profound ways by the federal violence perpetrated in Minneapolis, LA, Portland, Chicago, Washington and other targeted Blue cities. Closer to home, CalMatters reports that a “quieter escalation unfolded in San Diego” late last year, resulting in a 1500% increase in arrests in San Diego and Imperial Counties compared to the same period a year earlier. “Agents also swept Home Depot parking lots in Encinitas, National City and San Marcos...and made arrests near public schools.”

We are affected in myriad ways by this federal violence, overreach and callousness. Many of us feel shame and helplessness about these egregious acts committed in our name. Some of our residents and many who work in our homes and businesses are experiencing real fear. Many who are deeply rooted in communities all across our state and country are suffering as their families are torn asunder. Those whose skin is anything but white face a realistic prospect of being swept up in these indiscriminate raids. For some it is risky to pick up your kids from school, make a trip to the hardware store, or even go to the courthouse for a scheduled hearing relating to your immigration status.

The vast majority of immigrants arrested have no criminal record, even while the Trump Administration continues to claim that they are “the worst of the worst,” and the President himself shamelessly calls them “garbage.” We are all profoundly debased by this conduct and language.

Every Saturday morning between 11 and 12 many Del Mar residents gather near City Hall at 11th and CDM to protest these massive violations of civil and human rights. And on March 28, they will join with others nationwide in the next NO KINGS demonstrations, joining forces with Carmel Valley to maximize local impact.

Yes, we are all Minneapolis. And as Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey warned, “If we do not speak up, if we do not step up, it will be your city that is next.” Together, we can bring an end to the deep turmoil that has been inflicted all across our land, and restore us to a land of liberty and decency. ■



**Sandpiper**  
DEL MAR'S COMMUNITY JOURNAL

The Sandpiper is published by the Del Mar Community Alliance, a 501(c)(4) 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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*All editors, writers, and photographers are unpaid volunteers.*  
Email: editor@delmarsandpiper.org

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### The Sandpiper's Leadership Donors

Over the years, hundreds of Del Mar citizens have donated generously to the Del Mar Community Alliance (DMCA) in support of the Sandpiper. Since 2018, a total of \$296,400 has been contributed by Del Mar citizens, making it possible to bring the Sandpiper to every Del Mar family at no cost, via their mailboxes and online. The list below represents the community's cumulative leadership giving to DMCA between 2018 and February 13, 2026. Thank you!

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## NUDLI BRIDGES CULTURES

by Viki Kiss | Torrey Pines High School Junior

As I look down at my hands crusted in cocoa powder and bread shavings, I am reminded that 6,288 miles separate me from my family.

Over the years, dishes like Nudli, Gulyás, and Csirkepaprikás cultivate a union across the two homes I call home – set across the ocean. There is one in San Diego, Calif., filled with most of the tangible memories with my close family, my parents’ love, and insignificant sibling arguments – often accompanied by a visiting grandparent living down the hall. My other home is situated in two physical locations: Veszprém and Budapest, Hungary. Here, I am surrounded by cousins whom I see annually and, unfortunately, rarely speak with over the phone; aunts and uncles who can only bring up memories from my younger years; and the smell of a heartwarming dish prepared by a grandparent.

Luckily, I have had the opportunity to maintain a close-knit relationship with my Nagyi (Grandma) and Peti Papi (Grandpa) because their financial capabilities allow them to fly to California regularly. Unfortunately, this privilege has not yet extended to other members of my bloodline.

When I was younger, within minutes after my Nagyi landed in the U.S., she would always ask me what specific Hungarian dish I would like her to prepare. My answer would always be Nudli, rolled potato dumplings. Topped with cocoa powder and lingering with a sweet aftertaste, it reminds me of my Hungarian heritage.

Dishes like this built a bridge connecting my two homes.

Over the years, it became our tradition, regardless of what continent we reunited on, that Nudli would always be served. Even though this tradition started



Viktoria Kiss poses with her younger brother David Kiss and their grandparents, Nagyi and Peti Papa, in Portola Valley, Calif. Once every year, Kiss’s family travels to Veszprém and Budapest, Hungary, to visit their extended family. Photo: Krisztian Kiss

just between us, it evolved into my relationship with Peti Papa and Nagymama, as they also cooked my favorite upon arrival.

Not long ago, Peti Papa began preparing extra Nudli for me, storing them in the freezer so that they would be available whenever I needed them. A simple gesture like this keeps me feeling connected with my grandparents, even if we are an ocean apart.

Nudli is not just a dish; it means love, care, and compassion, constantly integrating my Hungarian heritage into everyday meals, bridging gaps between my two families – qualities I hope to bring into my future home. When you think about it, it is kind of sweet, just like Nudli. □

### IN BRIEF

#### COVID/FLU UPDATE

The bad flu season continues with 152 weekly flu hospitalizations in San Diego County through the week of February 7th and 15 deaths recorded since July 1, 2025. By comparison, COVID-19 infections resulted in 17 weekly hospitalizations, but the total number of deaths due to COVID since last July is 5 times higher at 75.

An mRNA flu vaccine developed by Moderna proved safe and effective in clinical trials, but the Federal Drug Administration initially

refused to consider licensing the vaccine, reflecting Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s bias against any mRNA product and the current administration’s denial of scientific findings. The currently available traditional flu vaccine is only a partial match to this year’s circulating flu strain. An mRNA vaccine could be quickly manufactured to match any flu variant. Another missed opportunity to protect your health.

# FAIR HOUSING SITES

by Don Mosier | Rimini Road

The number of potential sites for affordable housing on the Del Mar Fairgrounds has increased from three to six, according to a map presented to the Fair Board at their February 10th meeting (see map below). The three new sites include two in the City of San Diego, and one small sliver of land owned by Del Mar at the corner of Jimmy Durante and Via de la Valle. For Del Mar to receive credit for housing built on the San Diego property, additional actions, such as a land exchange or state legislation, would be required.

The feasibility of building on any of the six sites is currently being studied by consultants hired by the City of Del Mar and funded by a state HAP grant. That funding ends March 31st, and final reports are expected soon after. The Fair Board briefly discussed ending negotiations with Del Mar, but agreed to wait for the feasibility study reports before taking any action. ■



Map of Potential Housing Sites. Source: 22<sup>nd</sup> DAA, Feb. 10, 2026 Board meeting materials

## IN BRIEF

### ENRA END?

The Exclusive Negotiating Rights Agreement (ENRA) signed by the City of Del Mar and the 22nd DAA provides for “exclusive” negotiations for a mutually agreeable Fairgrounds housing site consistent with Del Mar’s 6th Cycle Housing Element, and requires the 22nd DAA to identify suitable sites. However, the sites reviewed on Feb. 10 include two that are in the City of San Diego (see above), and the 22nd DAA Board regularly discusses terminating ENRA negotiations. The State’s Department of Housing and Community Development has previously notified Del Mar that if “development of the Fairgrounds project within the planning period [is] rendered infeasible,” then Del Mar must implement a contingency program that requires an upzone of North Bluff and/or South Stratford properties to accommodate at least 54 lower income units.

### MEMORIAL DOG ROCKS



Memorial dog rocks from Del Mar’s Dog Beach have a home in Cardiff by the Sea. Photo: James Gooding

## MOVE IT OR LOSE IT

by Tom Neuman MD | DMF President

With good intentions, most of us try to be the best people that we can be. We see our doctors, try to eat right, exercise, and manage our stresses as best we can. It's hard to cut through the noise online or in our emails to know what is optimal, though. Sometimes, help is needed to guide or support our journey to good health. The Foundation is supporting two programs that are delivering information and instruction to keep our Del Mar community as healthy as it can be.

On January 28, Dr. Emily Manoogian, Ph.D., a Senior Staff Scientist at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, was the first speaker for the 3-part webinar series "Science Can't Wait." She studies the intricate interaction between our body's biological rhythms and the timing of our daily habits, including when and how much we sleep, eat, and exercise. She provided an informed discussion, demonstrating benefits for weight loss, as well as brain and body health. A recording of the webinar can be accessed through Salk's website, [www.salk.edu](http://www.salk.edu) and soon to be on the Foundation's website, [www.delmarfoundation.org](http://www.delmarfoundation.org). The Foundation is partnering with the Salk Institute to produce these three webinars in order to improve our community's health and highlight the importance of the basic research occurring in our neighborhood. Please join us for the next two webinars:

*March 11 – Smart Plants in a Changing World*

*May 13 – Turning the Immune System Against Breast Cancer*

For the past 20 years Silver Age Yoga has been providing yoga classes in the San Diego area to meet the special health needs of seniors. This past year, DMF partnered with Silver Age Yoga to offer free classes at St. Peter's Church for Del Mar seniors. These mat and standing yoga classes are at 10am every Friday. Classes are also provided at other locations during the week, as well. More information is available at, [www.silverageyoga.org](http://www.silverageyoga.org). As our doctors like to say, "Move it or lose it!"



*Silver Age Yoga at St. Peter's Church. Photo: Silver Age Yoga*

by Ashley Simpkins | Executive Director

### **Feeling the Love!**

DMCC's Champagne and Chocolate Open House had an incredible turnout on Friday 2/13 and we really felt the love from the community! An annual event that has been held around Valentine's Day for more than a decade, the purpose is so older adults and those who care about them can come to DMCC headquarters, connect with other members of the community, and enjoy some bubbly and chocolate on us. More than 100 people came to meet DMCC's participants, volunteers, and staff, and to learn more about what we do. They also received blood pressure screenings as part of San Diego County Love Your Heart week. The volunteers serving on the Social Good Times Committee worked hard to make it a successful friend-raiser.

If you were there and want to relive the memories, or if you want to view photos from any of DMCC's recent events, you can find them on our website at [www.dmcc.cc/eventphotos](http://www.dmcc.cc/eventphotos)

### **The first-ever DMCC Senior Fair!**

We're so excited to announce that on Saturday, April 18, DMCC will be hosting the Del Mar Senior Fair in partnership with the Farmers Market. While the Farmers Market is going on downstairs at the Civic Center, we'll be in the upstairs plaza with nonprofit and government information tables, all sharing services and resources that are a benefit to Del Mar seniors. We've had an incredible response from our nonprofit and government partners, so there will be much to learn about. We also have some other surprises in store to make it a true celebration of all this community has to offer to older adults. For the latest information, visit [www.dmcc.cc/seniorfair](http://www.dmcc.cc/seniorfair). Hope to see you there!

### **Volunteer of the Month – February**

DMCC's Volunteer of the Month for February 2026 was Randee Warren. Randee is a member of DMCC's Social Good Times Committee, which is responsible for planning our large-scale community events, like the recent Cookies and Cocoa Holiday Party and the Champagne and Chocolate Open House. Randee stood out as a clutch member of the team at both events! She was nominated by board member and committee chair Ann Feeney, because "Randee always volunteers to go shopping and bring supplies to our events, and she is always a big help at the events. We especially appreciate her volunteering to make the hot cocoa at Cookies and Cocoa!"

DMCC programs and services depend on our incredible volunteers! To learn more about Randee or opportunities to help our Social Good Times Committee, visit [dmcc.cc/volunteerofthemonth](http://dmcc.cc/volunteerofthemonth).

# RUN FOR THE MONEY

by Neelum Arya | Zuni Drive

The Del Mar Schools Education Foundation (DMSEF) helps to fund educational programs in our public schools in the areas of art, science, physical education, music, and innovation technology, collectively known as STEAM+. For the 2026-27 school year, DMSEF aims to raise \$1.4 million for the STEAM+ program. The funds pay for credentialed teachers who facilitate rich, authentic, hands-on learning experiences for students. Jogathon is one of the main fundraisers for DMSEF. Every school hosts an event with students, parents, and teachers running laps in support of the program. □

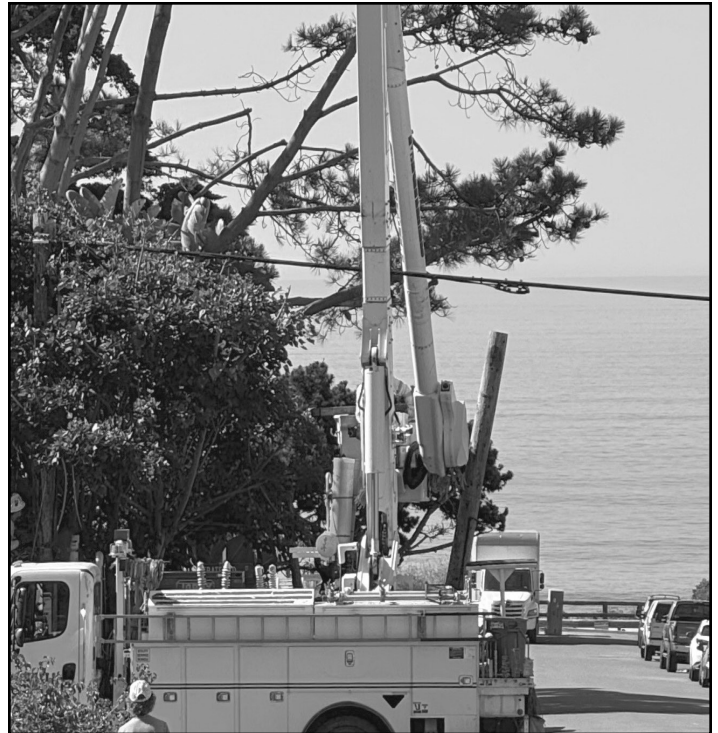


Photo: Neelum Arya

# DEL MAR DOINGS



Democracy Defenders rally at Del Mar Civic Center, Jan. 31, 2026.  
Photo: Frank Chisari



Undergrounding work continues; overhead pole lines coming down.  
Photo: Julie Maxey-Allison



Queensland restaurant going in next door to Better Buzz at Camino Del Mar and 15<sup>th</sup>. Photo: Julie Maxey-Allison



Bluffs work; More concrete poured into forms are set together parallel to protect the track.. Photo: Julie Maxey-Allison

## GARDEN WALKABOUT

by Mary Friestedt | Bellaire Street

How often have you walked by the Del Mar Library and wondered about the names of the amazing plants there? Or perhaps you have been curious about how the pile of rocks at the Del Mar Community Garden came to be. Maybe you want to know about planting more natives in your garden and want to learn about the best ones for our area. Or you may be interested in learning about how using mulch can help your plants grow and thrive. Or maybe you have noticed some new



Photo: Jill Gartman

trees at the Del Mar Post Office and want more information about them. For these and other reasons you need to mark your calendars for May 9, 2026, the Saturday before Mothers' Day, for a walk around the public gardens that the Del Mar Garden Club maintains.

On May 9 the DMCA will have knowledgeable members stationed at our community gardens to answer all your questions. The activities will begin at City Hall at 10 a.m. There you can get a map, check out the Pollinator Garden (funded by the Del Mar Foundation) and then begin your tour.

Dr. Michael Simpson, who has done two educational tree walks in town, will be at the Library to discuss the unusual plants that thrive there. Close by, you can learn about the plants at Del Mar Community Building. At the Post Office people, a Master Gardener and others will answer all your questions about plant maintenance and plant identification.

You do not want to miss this! See you all there on May 9. ▣

## ANIMAL LINGO

by Julie Maxey-Allison | 10<sup>th</sup> Street

We aren't the only animals whose behaviors are being scooped up, fed to, and swallowed by the AI "machine learning" process to surface as data. AI is also focused on other animals and insects in various ways. One is to communicate, to talk with animals. Recently, the New York Times front page report "Dogs Can Develop Vocabularies Like Toddlers" tells how, with focused training, specific dogs, Border Collies (who lead the pack on words learned, up to and over 1000) have mastered the names of more than 100 toys, a skill called label learning. Linguistic research has also centered on African Grey parrots, chimpanzees, whales, as well as dogs, cats, pigs, and bees, among other species.

As massive quantities of information are steadily collected via the internet and other sources and combined with software advances, AI's abilities are speeding up. Powerful new AI tools include information being gathered by small, lightweight recorders now installed around the globe that continually record animal sounds, adding to the rapidly improving algorithms. AI analyses are opening the possibility of enabling communication between human and other animal languages, as researchers study basic properties of language—the relationship among words that creates meaning—in search of ways to translate animal languages. We know how to talk to our animal pets. If this theoretical possibility becomes a reality, we could indeed talk with and understand diverse species responses. With more data, information about animal communication will grow. However, AI and deep-learning tools will not magically allow us to translate all animal sounds into English. Biologist's research is also needed to observe and identify sounds and behaviors to answer practical questions. Ethical issues remain.

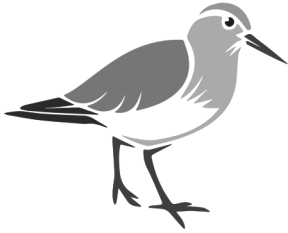
Our shared language allows us to understand the experiences of other humans. Will our ability to communicate with animals increase our empathy towards them or make it easier to exploit them? What if animals don't want to have a conversation? And, maybe, you don't want to know just what your pet is really thinking or the reasons the chicken crossed the road. ▣

# VISIT THE SANDPIPER ONLINE!

# SANDPIPER

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DATED MATERIAL



[www.delmarsandpiper.org](http://www.delmarsandpiper.org)

## LIFE SAVERS

by Julie Maxey-Allison | 10<sup>th</sup> Street

March is the month the Del Mar Lifeguards recruit student lifeguards for seasonal part-time and possibly full-time employment. The job: focus on the safety of the more than 3,000,000 (!) yearly beach visitors. In 2025, busy lifeguards made more than 1,100 rescues and almost 30,000 preventative actions—with 0 drownings. They also aided in 648 various medical issues not counting tending to the 635 victims of nasty stingray tail barb stings. Part-time student lifeguard Atom Keocherian, 18, knows the responsibilities well. The high school senior has been in the job for close to a year and went through the intense training: swift water techniques, use of rescue tools, Scuba diving, free diving, CPR, First-Aid, land based cliff rescues, and how to answer a myriad of questions from the public on a wide range of issues and to always keep eyes on the ocean.

Tryout date is Saturday, March 21, at 8 AM at Lifeguard Headquarters for applicants who will be at least 16 years old by June 1. The initial tryout is a 200 meter(m)-800m-200m Run-Swim-Run followed by an 800m paddle board race and capped off with an 800m run. Atom advises interested people take advantage of volunteer workouts earlier in March to meet people and learn the territory. Applicants must know how to run on sand, avoiding hazards, and swim out and back to the buoy, very different than a pool. Candidates who successfully navigate the tryout session will be invited to the interview process. The new hires, rookies, then work with team support. Atom reports that it has taught him how to be adaptable, to learn from mistakes, discipline, independence, and the importance of an efficient department as he works his 110 hours, Fridays 5:30-9:00 PM and Saturdays and Sundays. Student lifeguarding offers training for a potential career.

For specific information visit [governmentjobs.com/careers/delmarca/jobs/newprint/5214293](http://governmentjobs.com/careers/delmarca/jobs/newprint/5214293) ■



Photo: Mark Rathsam