

Daily Pilot

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Photos by James Carbone

RABBI REUVEN MINTZ, from the Chabad Center for Jewish Life, right, introduces Stephanie and Asher Avital, whose cousin, Or Levy, is a hostage held by Hamas in Gaza. The menorah-lighting took place at the atrium garden court at Fashion Island in Newport Beach on Thursday.

Festival of Lights event shines despite darkness

Celebrants marked the first night of Hanukkah at Fashion Island with some trepidation among the local Jewish community.

A menorah lighting took place in the retail center's atrium garden court, with the first candle lit by a family member of a hostage in the Israel-Hamas war. During the event, Newport Beach residents Stephanie and Asher Avital carried a poster of their cousin, Or Levy, asking for his release.

The conflict has cast a dark shadow over the holiday also known as the Festival of Lights. Many in the Jewish community are fearful of growing anti-Semitism and grieving over the scale of loss in the Middle East since the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel.

But beyond the conflict, the lighting Thursday night was a celebration of the holiday. Performances by the Orange County Klezmers kicked off the event, and prayers and words of hope were offered for the safe return of hostages and a peaceful end to the war. Also provided were holiday crafts, gifts and treats, in addition to face painting and balloon animals for children. Attendees were encouraged to donate toys for a community toy drive.



ASHER AVITAL, of Newport Beach, lights the menorah for the start of Chanukah during Festival of Lights public Menorah lighting ceremony hosted by Chabad Center for Jewish Life.

"It is a holiday that enriches our lives," Rabbi Reuven Mintz of the Chabad Center for Jewish Life said in a statement. "In ancient times, our ancestors rededicated the Menorah and its

lights in Jerusalem. [At this ceremony], we rededicate ourselves to making this world a better and brighter place, by performing acts of goodness and kindness. Chanukah also transmits

the universal and timely message that ultimately good will prevail over evil, freedom over oppression and light over darkness."

— Lilly Nguyen

Rivian reopens renovated South Coast Theater

BY ANDREW TURNER

Its doors shut for the better part of the last decade, a theater overlooking Main Beach has reopened as the Rivian South Coast Theater.

The property, formerly known as Laguna Beach South Coast Cinemas, was purchased by Rivian for \$10.7 million in April 2021, according to a report by the Orange County Business Journal.

Rivian, an electric-vehicle manufacturer, will open the event space — located at 160 South Coast Highway — to the public on Saturday, becoming the third space to be opened in the state this year.

"It's an honor for Rivian to be part of the Laguna Beach community as steward of the South Coast Theater in its next era," Tony Caravano, senior director of experiential marketing and community engagement for Rivian, said in a statement. "The site has been a beacon of innovation, community and creativity throughout its history, and Rivian is ready to carry that legacy forward."

The property opened as the New Lynn Theater in 1935. Following the acquisition, Rivian worked to restore features of the original structure, including the auditorium, balcony, marquee, proscenium arch, ticket booth and the original 129-seat theater area. The venue joined the National Register of Historic Places in March.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

GUESTS ENJOY a look of a new showroom and theater at the restored Rivian South Coast Theater in Laguna Beach during a dedication event on Friday. It opens to the public today.

"The history is important, but we're also looking forward to the future of this building and what it's going to mean for the community," Mayor Bob Whalen said at a dedication

event on Friday. "I'm so impressed with the way they energized this space, kind of re-

See **Theater**, page A4

Outdoor dining wins support in C.M.

Officials move to make permanent rules that helped eateries during the pandemic and were set to expire this month.

BY SARA CARDINE

The expansion of outdoor dining in Costa Mesa — an emergency accommodation granted to keep local businesses afloat during COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns — has since become an amenity enjoyed by restaurant owners and diners alike.

City officials this week took steps to codify the practice of placing additional seats in setbacks, parking lots and wide walkways and courtyards, approving an ordinance to make such changes allowable on a permanent basis.

The new regulation, which will take effect 30 days after an anticipated second reading in mid-January, allows restaurants to keep, initiate or expand outdoor dining options, so long as it meets a few conditions.

Drive aisles and pedestrian travel must not be blocked, and structures placed in parking lots can only remove up to five spots, or 25% of a business' required parking, whichever is less. Barriers and walls may only be 5 feet tall, with the top 1.5 feet required to be transparent.

Assistant planner Caitlyn Curley told council members in a regular meeting Tuesday the city has granted a total of 49 temporary use permits to allow for outdoor dining, since an urgency ordinance was first approved in June 2020. With the allowance set to expire at the end of the year, 22

See **Dining**, page A2

Petition aims to buoy marine habitats

OC Coastkeeper asks state agency to support expansion of research, restoration within O.C.'s marine protected areas.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Expansion of research and restoration projects to Orange County's marine protected areas (MPAs) may be on the horizon, depending on action taken by the state's California Fish and Game Commission in response to a petition submitted by OC Coastkeeper.

The nonprofit announced Monday its petition to Fish and Game requesting it "authorize and support credible research, monitoring, restoration and education projects within Orange County's MPAs."

The move comes as part of a routine 10-year review of policies guarding marine protected areas up and down the coast.

Ray Hiemstra, OC Coastkeeper's associate director of policy and projects, said he was present when talks first came about to establish networks of protected areas. He said the original intention had always been to allow research and restoration in the designated places but that legal language inserted later did not reflect that goal.

See **Marine**, page A3



File Photo

AN O.C. LIVE concert at Dick Church's in Costa Mesa in 2022 was made possible by a temporary law making outdoor dining legal during the pandemic. This week, officials made steps to permanently allow the practice.

DINING

Continued from page A1

restaurants are still offering outdoor dining.

"Of these active permits the majority ... are located within courtyards and walkways with the second most common location being parking spaces, [occurring] at seven outdoor dining areas," Curley said.

Costa Mesa planning commissioners in November drafted an ordinance to make such temporary arrangements legal on an ongoing basis. As such, staff approval alone is required for any expansions that constitute less than 50% of the existing business and fall within the parking removal cap. Anything beyond that would require a minor conditional use permit.

The initial ordinance required that any obviously temporary barriers — such as plastic cones, walls and paneling — be replaced with more permanent materials that comply with certain "aesthetic standards."

Jennifer Le, the city's director of economic and development services, explained the law did not intend to impose requirements that would force those currently holding temporary use permits to cease operations but to create a set of guidelines for future permanent use.

She recalled when the original allowance was made in 2020, a time when indoor dining was prohibited statewide, the shift outdoors was urgent.

"We were all just trying to transition outside for dining. Folks used whatever materials they had — many of them weren't really built for permanent installations," Le recalled.

"Our thought process is it wouldn't be unreasonable to have those materials upgraded from temporary orange barriers to, in some instances, something more permanent, since we are transitioning this permit to a permanent allowance."

Although council members roundly supported the expansion of outdoor dining, some questioned whether the aesthetic requirement might be too subjective and financially burdensome to impose on local business owners.

Councilwoman Arlis Reynolds made a motion to strike that requirement, and colleague Andrea Marr agreed.

"We did see, in some of the email comments, some of this outdoor area is still providing the necessary commercial activity to kind of keep these businesses in recovery," she said. "I am a little bit concerned about requiring some additional investment."

But Mayor John Stephens and Mayor Pro

Tem Jeffrey Harlan disagreed, saying that permanently allowing temporary barriers would have a negative visual impact, especially on highly trafficked streets like Newport Boulevard.

"You cannot have cones and funky barriers out on a major corridor of our city permanently, as a matter of right, in Costa Mesa," Stephens said, making a substitute motion to keep the aesthetic requirement in the ordinance.

Stephens' motion made provisions for businesses that wanted to experiment with outdoor dining by using temporary barriers for a period of one year before the ordinance would kick in. The motion passed 4-2, with Reynolds and Marr voting against the mayor's proposal.

Councilman Manuel Chavez said he could have gone either way on the aesthetic requirement, so long as there was some way to keep the pandemic-era practice going on a regular basis.

"For me, what matters aren't the particular nuances," he said. "What matters is that it's legal and that businesses that want to invest in our city, that want to try their luck with less parking and more outdoor dining can do that."

sara.cardine@latimes.com
Twitter: @SaraCardine

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

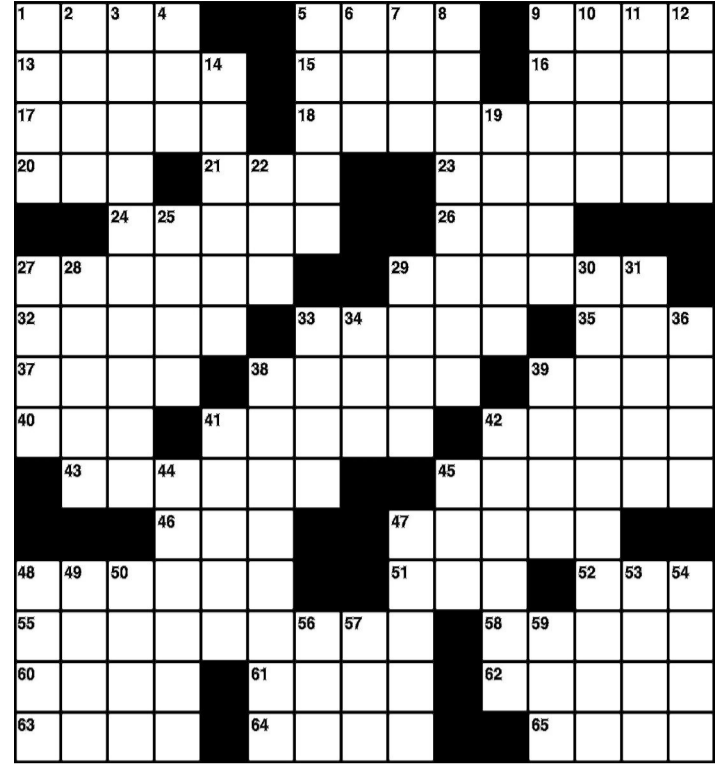
By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 In a _; ticked off
- 5 Makes fun of
- 9 Spill the beans
- 13 Paddled boat
- 15 _ personality; Jekyll/Hyde disorder
- 16 Etna's output
- 17 Boxer De La Hoya
- 18 Poison remedies
- 20 "Says _?"; skeptic's query
- 21 Crash into
- 23 Falk & Fonda
- 24 Head coverings
- 26 Nixon, for one
- 27 Pieces of asparagus
- 29 Large fruits
- 32 Cruise stops
- 33 Jungle hideaways
- 35 Ancient
- 37 Large cards
- 38 Compensate
- 39 Command to Rover
- 40 Wimple wearer
- 41 Coins
- 42 Nutmeg or cumin
- 43 Impolite looks
- 45 Hovels
- 46 Hotdog holder
- 47 " _ Were the Days"
- 48 Shocked
- 51 New Testament bk.
- 52 Not long _; recently
- 55 Fraternal
- 58 Part of the arm
- 60 Walkway
- 61 Bacardi beverages
- 62 Beauty parlor
- 63 Starry _; impractical
- 64 Email folder
- 65 Gets hitched

DOWN

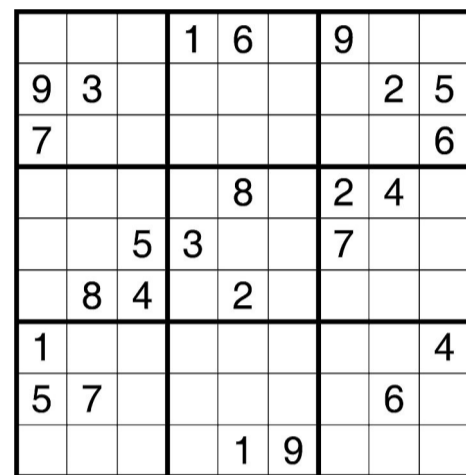
- 1 Flat-bottomed boat
- 2 Poet Ogden _
- 3 Babbling unintelligibly
- 4 Up _ point; only



SUDOKU

By the Mephram Group

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 box (in bold borders) contains every digit, 1 to 9. For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit sudoku.org.uk.



For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A4.

- so far
- 5 Second U.S. president
- 6 Play on words
- 7 Polish off
- 8 " _ when wet"; safety sign
- 9 Very drunk
- 10 Not prompt

- 11 Declare positively
- 12 Largemouth _; freshwater fish
- 14 Bloopers
- 19 Business transactions
- 22 Billboards
- 25 Stable

- breakfast
- 27 Bridge
- 28 Hocus- _
- 29 War casualty statistic
- 30 Conspicuous
- 31 Like a loose rope
- 33 Eye part
- 34 Is _ to; probably will
- 36 Changes the color of
- 38 Confirms, as a password
- 39 Health club offerings
- 41 Pulverize
- 42 Pushes hard
- 44 Diminished
- 45 "...coming 'round the mountain when _ comes..."
- 47 Romantic meeting
- 48 Qualified
- 49 Elephant's color
- 50 Sharpen
- 53 _ cholesterol; HDL
- 54 _ up; confesses
- 56 Regret
- 57 File drawer, perhaps
- 59 Attorney's field

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