

Daily Pilot

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2024 /// dailypilot.com



Frederick M. Brown | Daily Mail | Pool Photo

AN ORANGE COUNTY Sheriff's deputy escorts defendant Samuel Lincoln Woodward into Orange County Superior Court Wednesday for opening statements of the murder trial in the Jan. 2, 2018, stabbing death of Blaze Bernstein.

Opening statements in trial put focus on 'why'

BY ERIC LICAS

Defense attorneys for Sam Woodward did not deny the Newport Beach man with ties to an insurrectionist neo-Nazi group repeatedly stabbed and killed Blaze Bernstein, a gay Jewish former art school classmate, during a late night meet-up six years ago.

Instead, Kenneth Morrison of the Orange County Public Defender's office argued during opening statements Tuesday that his 26-year-old client's actions were the result of a struggle to come to terms with his own sexuality and conservative upbringing, as well as symptoms associated with autism spectrum disorder.

Defense attorney denies Sam Woodward, accused of killing Blaze Bernstein in 2018, was motivated by hate and points to struggles with sexuality, conservative upbringing and neo-Nazi brainwashing.

Woodward is facing a charge of first degree murder with a hate crime enhancement for Bernstein's death. If convicted, he could face life in prison.

Morrison claimed Woodward was not motivated by hate and that Bernstein's killing was not a hate crime.

"The 'why' is the single most important issue you will need to decide," Morrison told Orange County Superior Court jurors in a courtroom packed with about 50 relatives

and spectators.

Deputy Dist. Atty. Jennifer Walker painted Woodward as a prominent member of Atomwaffen Division, a neo-Nazi group that hosted "hate camps" and promoted sabotage in order to overthrow the government. She pointed out that he kept a sort of diary via email, in which he described catfishing and then ghosting gay men on Tinder.

See **Trial**, page A2

300% hike in mooring rents floated

Harbor Commission ships proposed increase to Newport council, to the frustration of many who live on the harbor.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Over the objections of many audience members, the Newport Beach Harbor Commission voted unanimously during its regular meeting Wednesday to recommend a 300% increase in rents for public moorings to the City Council.

The mooring rental rates have not changed since 2016. The commission began taking a new look at that revenue stream in 2021 on the behalf of the council and has held several meetings on the topic.

Commissioners propose an increase in monthly rents to \$20 per linear foot for the city's 478 on-shore moorings, up from the current rate of \$1.67 per linear foot. The monthly rent for the city's 731 off-shore moorings would be raised to a range of \$10.50 to \$23.25 per linear foot, depending

See **Mooring**, page A4

Meeting highlights conflicts over H.B. library

BY MATT SZABO

This week is National Library Week, and libraries continue to be a hot topic in Huntington Beach.

Wednesday night's Community & Library Services Commission meeting turned into a sort of venting session as commissioners and residents alike expressed frustration about two library issues in the city.

A study session held in Council Chambers featured a presenta-

See **Library**, page A3

Huntington Beach launches its new website

BY MATT SZABO

The city of Huntington Beach launched its new website on Monday morning, the culmination of a nearly two-year project.

The address remains the same, huntingtonbeachca.gov.

City public affairs manager Jennifer Carey called the new website a "huge undertaking" for the communications depart-

ment, which included working with a contractor to eliminate nearly 50% of the pages that were on the previous website.

"Even for me, as staff, it was hard to locate information," she said. "My hope is that this really fixes that for people and helps them get what they need quicker."

She said the back-end management system was so convoluted on the old website that to

make edits or changes, city staff would have to go through information services, similar to a help desk ticket.

"We are essentially empowering our staff and the subject matter experts to be their own editors and update content on the fly, not having to rely on a technology professional to make those changes for them," Carey said. "The hope is that by it being user-friendly on the

back end, we can enhance the experience on the front end as well."

The site will be working out the kinks in the coming days, including on a new curated search page that greets visitors on the home screen.

"We are able to monitor the analytics of how many people are visiting our site, and what

See **Website**, page A2

Tibetan monks to return to Laguna

BY ANDREW TURNER

Tibetan monks are scheduled to arrive in Laguna Beach this weekend, with the public invited to take in a series of related cultural events during their 10-day visitation.

The Drepung Gomang monks will be in town April 14 through 23, making their return to the coastal community five years after their last trip.

Considered direct disciples of the Dalai Lama, the monks can be seen throughout their visit at the Sawdust Art Festival and the

Neighborhood Congregational Church.

The opening ceremonies will take place at the Sawdust Art Festival on Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. It is there where work will be performed daily until a sand mandala dedicated to world peace is created.

Completion of the mandala is scheduled for April 21, and there will be a dissolution ceremony shortly thereafter, serving as a reminder that nothing lasts forever.

There will also be opening and closing blessings each day, during which those in attendance will

witness the monks chanting. The opening blessing occurs at 10 a.m. daily, while the festival grounds will close at 5 p.m. each evening, with the exception of Wednesday, April 17, and Saturday, April 20, when it will close at 4 p.m.

Franky Duschane, director of marketing and public relations for the Sawdust Art Festival, recalled her initial encounter with the monks during their visit in 2019.

"In January, all of our artists kind of scatter to the wind after Winter Fantasy ends, so it's very,

See **Monks**, page A2



File Photo

TIBETAN MONKS perform with traditional instruments during an opening ceremony for the creation of the White Tara Mandala at the Sawdust Art Festival in Laguna Beach in January 2019.

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CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH

NOTICE INVITING BIDS

Sealed bids shall be submitted electronically via PlanetBids to office of the City Clerk, 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach, CA 92660 By 10:00 AM on the 2nd day of May 2024, at which time such bids shall be opened and read for

BALBOA BOULEVARD, NEWPORT BOULEVARD AND 32ND STREET PAVEMENT REHABILITATION

Contract No. 8833-2

\$5,039,000.00 Engineer's Estimate



Approved by

James M. Houlihan Deputy PWD/City Engineer

Prospective bidders may obtain Bid Documents, Project Specifications and Plans via PlanetBids:

https://pbsystem.planetbids.com/portal/22078/portal-home

Hard copy plans are available via Santa Ana Blue Print at (949) 756-1001 Located at 2372 Morse Avenue, Irvine, CA 92614

Contractor License Classification(s) required for this project: "A" and "C-10" For further information, call Daniel Jordan, Project Manager at (949) 644-3344

NOTICE:

No contractor or subcontractor may be listed on a bid proposal for a public works project (submitted on or after March 1, 2015) unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5 [with limited exceptions from this requirement for bid purposes only under Labor Code section 1771.1(a)].

No contractor or subcontractor may be awarded a contract for public work on a public works project (awarded on or after April 1, 2015) unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5.

This project is subject to compliance monitoring and enforcement by the Department of Industrial Relations.

CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH NOTICE INVITING BIDS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF

GLENNEYRE PARKING STRUCTURE REHABILITATION (CIP 23-9110)

N-1 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that electronic bids will be received by the City of Laguna Beach for the GLENNEYRE PARKING STRUCTURE REHABILITATION CIP 23-9110, together with appurtenances thereto.

N-2 DATE OF OPENING BIDS: Bid prices for each line item of the Schedule of Work must be entered and all other required documents for the bid proposal packet (pages B-1 through B-4, B-7 through B-15) must be uploaded to the PlanetBids system no later than 2:00 PM on May 14, 2024, after which time bids will be publicly opened and read aloud at the Office of the City Engineer of the City of Laguna Beach, located at 479 Ocean Avenue, Laguna Beach, California, 92651. No late bids will be accepted.

N-3 DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK: In general, the work comprises the of the repair and structural strengthening of the existing Glenneyre Street Parking Structure including post tensioned concrete slab and roof inspection and repair, FRP wrapping of existing columns, planter refurbishment with related plumbing repairs, installation of helical anchors at stairways, application of traffic coating on the second level, within the City of Laguna Beach.

N-4 PRE-BID CONFERENCE: There will be a mandatory pre-bid conference for this project on Tuesday, April 23, 2024 at 10:00 A.M. Attendees are to meet at GLENNEYRE PARKING STRUCTURE (PARKING LOT #6), 501 Glenneyre Street, Laguna Beach, CA 92651. Failure to attend will result in your bid proposal being declared non-responsive.

N-5 AWARD OF CONTRACT: (a) The City reserves the right after opening bids to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality (non-responsiveness) in a bid, or to make award to the lowest responsive, responsible bidder and reject all other bids, as it may best serve the interest of the City. (b) As a condition of award, the successful bidder will be required to submit payment and performance bonds and insurance.

N-6 COMPLETION OF WORK AND LIQUIDATED DAMAGES: All work is to be completed in a total of SIXTY (60) WORKING DAYS, excluding holidays, from the date specified in the Notice to Proceed, which is anticipated to be September 23, 2024. Liquidated damages shall be \$2,000 per working day, for each and every working days delay in finishing the work.

N-7 CONTRACTOR'S LICENSE CLASSIFICATION: The Contractor shall possess a valid Class A, General Engineering, Contractor License at the time of submitting bids, in accordance with provisions of Chapter 9, Division III of the California Business and Professions Code.

N-8 WAGE RATE REQUIREMENTS: In accordance with the provisions of Sections 1773.2 of the California Labor Code, copies of the general prevailing rate of per diem wages as determined by the State Director of Industrial Relations are available on the Internet at the World Wide Web site of the State Department of Industrial Relations at www.dir.ca.gov under Statistics and Research. It shall be mandatory upon the contractor to whom the contract is awarded and upon any subcontractor under him to pay not less than said specified rates to all workers employed by them in the execution of the contract. All parties to the contract shall be governed by all provisions of the California Labor Code relating to prevailing wage rates; Sections 1770-1781 inclusive.

N-9 RETAINAGE FROM PAYMENTS: The Contractor may elect to receive 100 percent of payments due under the Contract Documents from time to time, without retention of any portion of the payments by the City, by depositing securities of equivalent value with the City in accordance with the provisions of Section 22300 of the Public Contract Code.

N-10 OBTAINING OR INSPECTING CONTRACT DOCUMENTS: Contract Documents, in digital Adobe Acrobat (.PDF) format, are available at the City of Laguna Beach's website at https://www.lagunabeachcity.net/do-business-here/rfps-bids. Once at this site, click on the "Vendor Portal & Bid Opportunities" icon. If you are not currently registered with PlanetBids for the City of Laguna Beach, please click on the "New Vendor Registration" button, then complete the electronic supplier registration process. Interested firms must be registered in order to submit a bid. Firms must also check the website periodically for addenda information as failure to acknowledge any and all addenda will result in bid disqualification.

N-11 REGISTRATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS: No contractor or subcontractor may be listed on a bid proposal for a public works project (submitted on or after March 1, 2015) unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5 [with limited exceptions from this requirement for bid purposes only under Labor Code section 1771.1(a)]. No contractor or subcontractor may be awarded a contract for public work on a public works project (awarded on or after April 1, 2015) unless registered with the Department of Industrial Relations pursuant to Labor Code section 1725.5. This project is subject to compliance monitoring and enforcement by the Department of Industrial Relations.

N-12 ESTIMATE OF PROBABLE COST: The estimate of probable cost for the project is \$1,500,000.

N-13 PROJECT REPRESENTATIVE: All communications relative to this project shall be directed to Alpha Santos, Project Manager, at santos@lagunabeachcity.net. Deadline for all inquiries is 5:00 PM on May 3, 2024.

BY ORDER OF THE CITY OF LAGUNA BEACH By: Thomas Perez, Assistant Director of Public Works

April 5, 2024 Published: Daily Pilot April 5, 2024 & April 12, 2024

MERCHANDISE 800

Miscellaneous Merchandise

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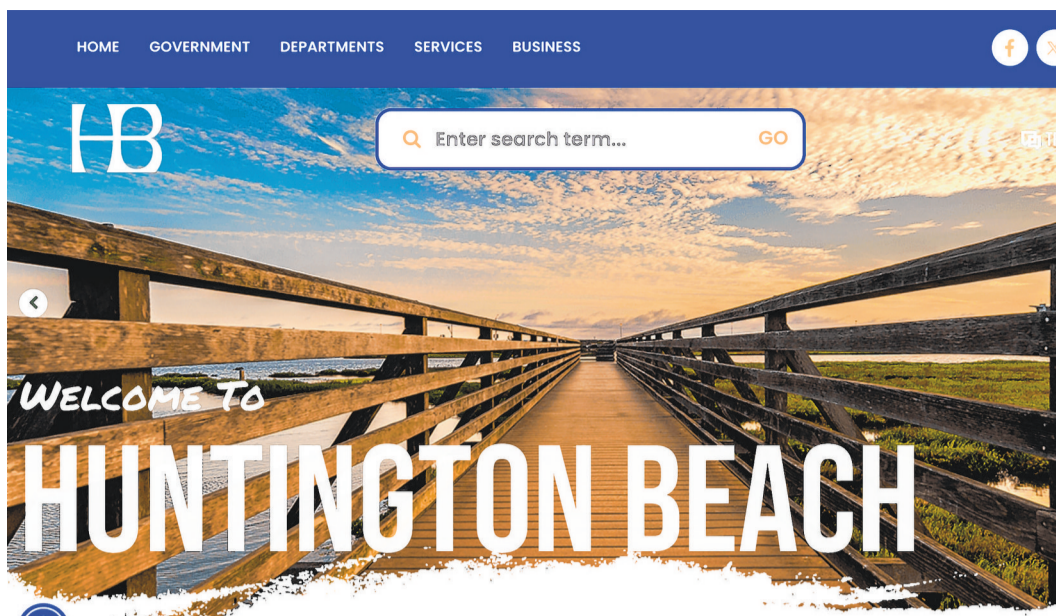
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HUNTINGTON BEACH'S new city website, in development for nearly two years, launched on Monday.

Matt Szabo

WEBSITE

Continued from page A1

pages are they predominantly visiting," Carey said. "Based on that, we're able to curate the search features so that those items pop up to the top. We're making those top hits front and center."

Google is still indexing the new pages, she said, so that search functionality is expected to continuously improve.

Aesthetically, the new site features background

pictures of some iconic Surf City locales. A button on the right side allows site text to be translated into dozens of languages.

"Obviously, our primary focus is always the residents and the businesses here, but we are a big tourism city," Carey said. "We see people from all over the world coming here to Huntington Beach, and if we want to maintain that reputation as a world destination then we need to enhance our offerings to account for that."

Scrolling down, users will

find "quick links" — buttons that allow visitors to do things like request a service, make a payment or search for a city committee agenda. The buttons are customizable based on what people are clicking.

Further down on the page is Huntington Beach city news and events. Carey said she anticipates the city's news website Surf City Break, as well as the city's Homeless Solutions and Business Development pages, eventually going away in favor of this one-stop shop.

She encouraged visitors to use a survey function that pops up in the bottom-right corner of the screen.

"We're still in this migration process," Carey said. "It's by no means a 100%, absolutely perfect, finished product. But that's really why we have that survey feature available. If residents see anything that's not working, or they know a way that it could work better, we want to hear from you."

matthewszabo@latimes.com Twitter: @mjszabo

MONKS

Continued from page A1

very quiet here on these grounds in January, typically," Duschane said. "They were in the Healy House, which is our common room next door. ... I was able to witness the mandala being constructed from the very first grain of sand, and it was truly, for me, a remarkable experience."

"It was the first time I had ever seen anything like that, let alone witnessed something like that, and I was present for that. I was present for the opening ceremony, every day starting the day with sound and ending the day with their

chanting." Duschane said the events on the grounds do not require admission fees, and they are inclusive to people from all walks of life.

Neighborhood Congregational Church will host an introduction to Buddhism from 7 to 9 p.m. on Monday, April 15. The church will be the host site for an explainer session regarding the world peace mandala from 6 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, April 17. On Saturday, April 20, a cultural pageant from 7 to 9 p.m. will feature a mandala prayer, as well as the good luck, black hat and snow lion dances.

A dinner event with the monks will be held at Ke-

bab Kurry from 6 to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, April 16.

Following their weeklong project at the Sawdust Art Festival, the monks will participate in Earth Day activities on Monday, April 22. They will visit the Ecology Center in San Juan Capistrano from 10 a.m. to noon. In the evening, the holy men will pray for the Earth at HeartSpaceOC at Laguna Health & Wellness in Laguna Woods.

A blessing ceremony at the Rivian South Coast Theater in Laguna Beach concludes the visit at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 23.

Donations are encouraged, with all proceeds going to support the more than 2,000 monks of the Drepung Gomang Monas-

tery in Mundgod, India.

"We feel fortunate to welcome the monks to Laguna again," Pam Wicks, an organizer of the visit, said in a statement. "They have traveled across the United States to various communities like ours since last August. Having them as our guests to share their art, culture and blessings is a marvelous opportunity for everyone in our community to learn about this struggling nation's history, culture and Tibetan Buddhism."

For more information on the monks and activities surrounding their local trip, visit monksinlaguna.com.

andrew.turner@latimes.com Twitter: @AndrewTurnerTCN

TRIAL

Continued from page A1

"This is [expletive] hilarious," Woodward wrote on May 14, 2017. "I tell sodomites I'm bicurious, which makes them try to convert me ... Get them hooked by acting coy, maybe send them a pic or two, beat around the bush and pretend to tell them that I like them and then kabam, I either un-friend them or tell them they have been pranked, ha ha."

He and Bernstein had been classmates at the Orange County School of the Arts in Santa Ana, where the defendant was viewed as a pariah by most of his peers, according to Morrison, who said that was partly due to his then-undiagnosed autism spectrum disorder and staunchly conservative views, particularly in regards to sexuality.

Woodward grew up in a traditional Catholic household, with even his father telling investigators that he

did not believe he would be willing to come out to relatives if he were gay, Morrison said. The defense attorney further claimed his client did pursue a romantic relationship with at least one male student at OCSA, Gabriel Morris.

The defendant and victim lost touch with each other after Bernstein began taking classes at the University of Pennsylvania and Woodward started attending Cal State Channel Islands. The defendant, described as impressionable and a history buff by many who knew him, continued to struggle to make friends into college. That made him an easy target for recruitment and indoctrination by Atomwaffen Division, Morrison argued.

Woodward had already catfished numerous other gay men on social media by the time he and Bernstein matched on Tinder in June 2017, Walker said.

Morrison pointed out that Bernstein told numerous other mutual acquaintances he had matched with his former art school classmate, despite being asked to keep the connection a secret.

Six months later, Woodward reached out to Bernstein and apologized for ghosting him. The victim warily accepted the gesture, and only agreed to meet with him that evening after Woodward mentioned he had gone through problems related to substance abuse, although investigators would not find direct

evidence of such issues.

Cell tower data show Woodward picked Bernstein up at his home late on the evening of Jan. 2, 2018, before heading to nearby Borrego Park. From there, according to the data, Woodward apparently returned home for about an hour, then went back to the park for another hour. Details regarding what exactly happened during that time remain unconfirmed.

Bernstein's mother, Jeanne Pepper, recalled from a witness stand on Wednesday the moment she realized her son had gone missing. They were supposed to go to the dentist's office on Jan. 3, but he missed the appointment. She thought the 19-year-old had just slept in, until their housekeeper called and told her he wasn't in his room that morning.

"She said the bed was made up when she walked in," Pepper said. "I screamed at that moment. I ran to the car, and I called my husband."

They found find their son's keys, wallet and glasses when they got to their house. But his body wouldn't be found for another six days. An examination of his social media accounts would lead his relatives to contact Woodward, who was believed to be one of the last people to ever speak to Bernstein.

Heavy rain that Jan. 9 would partially unearth Bernstein's shallow grave in Borrego Park, not far from his family's Foothill Ranch home. He had been stabbed 28 times, including numerous cuts to his neck and defensive wounds on his hands. And in the days that followed, a large amount of Nazi propaganda discovered on Woodward's phone would cast him as a suspect in the case.

"Blaze fought for his life as best as he could," Walker said.

The trial is expected to continue throughout the spring. Morrison repeatedly said he expects his client to testify in court.

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Send Letters to the Editor to erik.haugli@latimes.com. See Mailbag for guidelines.

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

Crossword grid with letters: M A S S, S T A T, A P R I L, A L I A, P A T H, P R O V E, R O L L, A L T O, P I P E S, Y E L L O W, C A R D, M E S S, Y O N, I K E, S C A R F, S C H M O, O R B, L O R I, S A L A M A N D E R, I P O D, E V A D E, E D N A, C A S E, C L O S E D, T E E S, E Y E, P E R I P S, W I R E S, A R C, D A N, D U S T, T A B L E S, C A P E, I T A L Y, C O A L, O V E R, S A L A D, D I V A, M I S O, C H E S S, C L A Y, E A T S

Sudoku grid with numbers: 4 2 5 6 9 3 8 1 7, 8 9 1 7 4 5 3 6 2, 6 7 3 2 8 1 4 9 5, 9 1 8 5 7 6 2 3 4, 7 5 4 3 2 9 6 8 1, 2 3 6 4 1 8 5 7 9, 5 8 7 9 3 2 1 4 6, 3 4 2 1 6 7 9 5 8, 1 6 9 8 5 4 7 2 3

HIGH SCHOOL BASEBALL

CdM blanks Newport Harbor behind Stevie Jones' gem

BY SCOTT FRENCH

There's so much detail that drives Corona del Mar's bid for a third Wave League baseball title in as many tries, but the Sea Kings' best chance for success, head coach Kevin McCaffrey noted, is quite simple.

"As Stevie Jones goes, as Dillan Lane goes," he said, "is how we go."

Jones tossed another gem Wednesday afternoon and Lane drove in three runs, including the first two in a four-run first inning, as CdM made quick work of Newport Harbor in the third of four Battle of the Bay encounters this season, romping to a 5-0 triumph to ensure at least a split in the series.

CdM improved to 12-8 overall, and 3-2 in league. Newport Harbor is 8-12, 2-3 in league.

Jones (7-1), a sophomore left-hander, was mostly magnificent

in tossing his third shutout of the season, relying on a devastating changeup to strike out 12 while walking none, spreading four hits, and allowing just one runner, after an error, past first base. He threw 77 strikes on 104 pitches and dropped his earned-run average over 60.2 innings to 0.97.

"He's our guy," McCaffrey said. "He's done that all year. It's pretty special. ... He gets right after people. He was throwing all [three] of his pitches for strikes and spotting them. It was another really special performance."

Jones conceded a leadoff single to the Sailors' Jack Pinkert, then retired 21 of the next 24 batters he faced before Wyatt Gahm's two-out single in the top of the seventh inning. Only Gahm got to second base, advancing on Grant Horsley's two-out single in the fifth after reaching on that error. Ryan Williams

had the Sailors' other hit, an infield single in the fourth.

"Boy, that was an impressive performance," said Newport Harbor head coach Josh Lee, whose team was coming off a 2-0 home win, on Lucas Perez's two-hitter, in Tuesday's meeting. "As somebody who's a pitch-caller, it's got to be fun [for McCaffrey] when a kid's doing that, right?"

"I mean, fastball in, fastball out, fastball up, changeup, cutter, curveball. Wherever he wanted to. ... He's only a sophomore. That kid's going to be a problem in this league for awhile, and we're going to have to figure out how to solve it over the next couple years."

Jones, who also earned the win at home in last week's 12-2 romp in the first Battle of the Bay encounter, also reached base three times and scored the



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

STARTING PITCHER Stevie Jones (14) of Corona del Mar throws during the Battle of the Bay game against rival Newport Harbor on Wednesday.

See **Baseball**, page A4

LIBRARY

Continued from page A1

tion by community and library services director Ashley Wysocki on the parent/guardian children's library book review board and possible outsourcing of the Huntington Beach Public Library to a private, for-profit company.

The City Council voted 4-3 last week to approve adoption of an ordinance that establishes the review board. At the previous meeting, the council voted 4-3 to seek bids for outsourcing of library management.

A lot has happened since the community and library services commission last met on Feb. 7, incidentally the same day librarians began recataloging children's books in the Central Library per City Council instruction.

Commissioner Laura Costelloe said the timing of the possible change in library management made it seem vengeful.

"If it was truly about sav-



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

BETHANY WEBB speaks against outsourcing management of the Huntington Beach Public Library at the Community & Library Services Commission meeting on Wednesday.

ing money and presented at any other time, I feel like it would be different," she said. "Librarians are not perverses."

As for the children's book review board, efforts would be made to sell or donate non-approved books to other libraries, and Costelloe also found this flawed.

"We're polluting other local cities like Costa Mesa and Fountain Valley, our

good neighbors," she said. "Hey, this book isn't OK, but we're going to throw it in your direction.' It doesn't make any sense. There's so much of this that doesn't even make any sense, and I'm struggling to keep my thoughts together."

Commissioner Taryn Palumbo noted that of more than 60 total speakers Wednesday night and emails received, she only heard four people in sup-

port of the review board and outsourcing. She said she has two children, ages 3 and 5, and does not want to give up control of assessing what they read to a review board or anyone else.

"As a parent, I believe that my child should be able to see, read and learn about all inclusive communities," Palumbo said. "However, if you do not share the same values as me, then do not read that book to your child."

Committee Chair Austin Edsell posed a lengthy series of questions to Wysocki, who confirmed that the request for proposals for outsourcing the library management could include certain things that the city wanted out of an operator, including requirements on the education of staff. He also asked about pay scale.

"At this time, that's something we can't speak on because we don't know what the details of that may be," Wysocki said.

Wysocki said there is currently no confirmed timeline for this RFP to be re-

leased.

During her presentation, she also said parents will soon have two new choices for library cards for their minors. The Imagine card will allow access only to books for 17 and under, while the Inspire card will allow access to the entire collection.

"These cards are currently being designed and printed," Wysocki said. "Once ready, our team will conduct a marketing campaign to notify the public of these new options."

Commissioner Ceason Baker was open in her support of the measures brought forward by the conservative members of the City Council.

"I know a lot of people have questioned the qualifications for the review board, and I did find that a bit ironic considering not everyone sitting up here has a degree," she said. "So, pot meet kettle. We have someone sitting on the City Council that got six votes," she said, apparently referring to Councilwoman Rhonda Bolton, who was

appointed to her seat in June 2021 on a 4-2 vote of the council after Tito Ortiz resigned. "Why are we not doing everything in power to protect and nurture our children, rather than allowing them to be exposed to harmful content because they're mere pawns in an agenda?"

Also on Wednesday, California Assembly Bill 1825 passed the Assembly Education Committee. The bill would prohibit public libraries from excluding materials based on the origin, background or views of those who made them or the opinions expressed in the materials.

The bill, authored by Assembly member Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance), now advances to the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

- ACROSS**
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Shawkat
15 Hiking trail
16 Demonstrate
17 "I'm on a _!"
18 Choir voice
19 Organ parts
20 Soccer warning: 2 wds.
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24 "Round _ virgin..."
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60						61		62				63		
64								65				66		
67								68				69		

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.

4								1
8				4				3
6		3	2					9 5
	1		5					
			3		9			
					8			7
5 8					2	1	4	6
		2		6				8
								3

For answers to the crossword and Sudoku puzzles, see page A2.

- DOWN**
1 Jesus' mother
2 _ vera
3 Pie-cooling spot
4 First American woman in space: 2 wds.
5 Reproduce
6 Soft mineral
7 "_ girl!"
8 God of thunder
- 9 Starter course, for short
10 Meat grade
11 Tug-of-war item
12 Composer Charles
13 Not as much
21 "That had to hurt"
22 Lowered, as lights

- 26 Org. for RV owners
27 Pizza portion
28 Insured patient's cost
29 Came up
30 Enjoy
31 Necklace closer
32 Mythical underworld
33 More unusual
34 Actress Zellweger
35 Military bigwigs
37 Choose
38 Bottom line: 2 wds.
43 EMT's skill
47 Used to be
48 Book of maps
49 Put off
50 Puck's shape
51 Provo's state
52 Discount event
54 "Back in Black" band
55 Heat to 212 degrees
56 Volcano's output
57 Keds competitor
58 Termite, e.g.
59 Greek god of love
61 QB's gains

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Lyrics by **Sean Hartley** and **Daniel Messé**
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MOORING

Continued from page A1

on the mooring length, up from the current rental fee of \$3.35 per linear foot. The proposed new rates were arrived at after Netzer and Associates prepared an appraisal report.

Revenue generated by the mooring rentals goes toward the city's tidelands fund, which finances the city's harbor department, maintenance and enhancement of the tidelands, environmental protection initiatives and support of public access and recreational activities, according to Ira Beer, vice chair of the Harbor Commission.

In a presentation Wednesday night, Beer said the increase prevents the subsidizing of individuals using public land — in this case, water — and “ensures that mariners mooring vessels over public tidelands pay an equitable amount for the privilege of accessing their vessel while enjoying the use of these valuable and limited resources.”

Beer noted the city's general fund is compensating for a \$4.6-million deficit in the tidelands fund for the 2023 fiscal year.

Beer reiterated statements made in February by Harbor Commission Chair Stephen Scully that the city needed to implement a rent hike after a 2007 Orange County Grand Jury report

found Newport Beach was undercharging boat owners for mooring permits.

Beer maintained the exponential increase would only reach current market values.

“While a 300% increase does seem very substantial ... mooring rates have seen only one adjustment over the past 20 years, and that was pulled back in 2016,” Beer said. “Subsequently, the only rate adjustments that have been applied did not even keep up with the [consumer price] index as they are limited to not exceed 2% annually.”

Beer noted the increases, if approved by City Council, would not go into effect until the start of 2025 and would be phased in over the course of five years to meet the target goal.

The City Council is expected to consider the matter in early summer, city spokesman John Pope said Thursday.

Speakers who addressed the commission during the public comment portion of the meeting called on the panel to review an alternative appraisal commissioned by residents instead of relying on the report by Netzer and Associates. They perceived conflict of interest because Netzer is involved with the Newport Aquatics Center, but the city has denied such a conflict.

Opponents to the rate hikes also noted some of the commissioners have boats



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

RESIDENT MIKE GAUTHIER goes ashore in his small motor boat in Newport Harbor in February. He and his live-aboard neighbors would be affected by a rent increase for the public moorings proposed by the Harbor Commission.

and private docks attached to their homes, which some viewed as an additional layer of conflict of interest.

One boat owner and Newport Beach resident of 12 years, Jake Pollgreen, told the commission that owning a boat in the harbor had been a dream while he was growing up in Chino Hills.

“[Vice chair] Beer, you mentioned the runway of five years as though to soften the blow,” Pollgreen said.

“That alone just shows that you yourself believe this to be a little hard for us to take, and then you're saying, ‘Oh, we got to do it, but let's make it a little easier for them.’ There's been a lot of numbers and talks and quotes from other meetings that I have not attended, so I do rely a lot on the trust

here from these other members [of the audience], but this just bums me out.

“Maybe one day I'll have a dock with a nice boat on it and not have to pay certain amounts, but at this time and at this rate, I will eventually be forced out of it, and you'll force a lot of us out of [the harbor].”

Others described the rates that came from the appraisal as “comparing apples to oranges,” as it referenced public moorings in other cities like San Diego, Monterey, Morro Bay and Santa Barbara, which offer services that Newport Beach moorings do not. Newport Harbor users have access to public facilities but do not have private utilities included with the moorings.

Prior to the vote, Commissioner Don Yahn said he heard and felt a lot of the pain from mooring permit holders, saying the decision was not made lightly.

“I know [the increases are] difficult, and I know that it will affect the livelihoods of those in this room,” said Yahn. “And since the rates haven't been adjusted for decades, we're talking about major sticker shock. I have read all the materials. I have done my homework. I've read and checked with other cities and our city staff. I've made phone calls, talked ... to appraisers, the [state] land use commission and many yacht clubs. I don't think it's a money grab.”

Several who will be affected by a hike in rates, which include both recreational boat owners and those who live aboard their boats, said they are disappointed in the decision and the “inevitability” they feel they are facing.

Chris Benzen, who rents a spot for his boat at one of the public moorings, said he believes the City Council will likely approve the increases. He is hopeful Council Chambers will be packed at the time of the hearing, but he expects the issue will ultimately land in court.

“We'll issue a legal letter, then if they approve [the rent increases], file for injunctive relief and let the courts decide on these per-

ceived conflicts of interest. It's unfortunate that we have to sue our city,” Benzen said. “I don't take lightly wasting taxpayer dollars, but [the city] is wasting taxpayer dollars by pushing this through even with all the information I've provided them with ample time. The citizens, I hope, do not place the blame on us.”

“We're just trying to protect our interests but also to hold the city accountable. We can't get answers from the Harbor Commission. We can't get answers from the City Council or get the city attorney to step in. We tried the California State Lands Commission, the lieutenant governor, [Rep.] Katie Porter, [state Sen.] Dave Min, [Assemblywoman] Diane Dixon — we tried everyone. The only arbiter of justice, at this point, is going to be a judge.”

On Thursday, Jessie and Mike Fleming, who have a live-aboard boat in Newport Harbor, said they've heard from neighbors who say they probably will move out or sell their boats.

“We're all very disappointed. Some people said they're going to be able to hold on for a few years, but once it got up to a certain rate that they'd have to leave,” said Jessie Fleming. “But, this is our neighborhood. It's our community.”

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BASEBALL

Continued from page A3

fourth run as the Sea Kings' early burst provided a nice foundation to work from.

“[That lead] takes a lot of pressure off of me,” he said, “gives me a lot of room to work with, allows me to make a couple of mistakes, let the defense relax a little bit. Just kind of sets the tone for a good game.”

There weren't many mistakes, and he got stungier

as things proceeded, striking out nine from the third through sixth innings. He retired the side on called third strikes in the sixth.

“Stevie's been balling all season,” said Lane, Corona del Mar's senior catcher. “We're always confident with him on the mound, and I think it helps our whole team, even offensively, when we know he's pitching and he's dealing.”

The victory lifts the Sea Kings, Wave champions in 2021 and 2022 before last year's brief stint in the superior Surf League, above

the fray — along with Laguna Beach, a 4-1 winner at Marina — after all four teams went into Wednesday's games with 2-2 league marks. They'll visit Newport Harbor for Friday's final faceoff, followed the next two weeks by three-game series against Laguna Beach and Marina.

Given Jones' mastery, the Sea Kings put the game away quickly, sending nine batters to the plate against sophomore right-hander Gavin Guy in the first inning. The first four batters — Brady Gadol, Carter

Danz, Lane and Jones — reached on singles, with Lane driving in the first two runs and No. 8 hitter Nick Salmon the latter pair.

CdM scored the fifth against two relievers in the fourth inning, with Lane's one-out single bringing home William Cheichi, and left the bases loaded.

Guy, who surrendered five hits and four earned runs while getting just four batters out in last week's rivalry loss, was throwing on just three days rest and with a 35-pitch ceiling.

“Just to get some work in,” Lee said. “I think maybe an element of that kind of created some looser approaches, and they made us pay. You've got to be able to execute two or three different pitches for strikes, and we didn't do that in the first, but we settled down and did a pretty good job after that.”

Freshman right-hander Keaton Anderson, making his varsity debut, was particularly impressive, throwing seven of his last eight pitches for strikes in the bottom of the sixth to

retire the Sea Kings in order.

“He's a starter on our JV team, and he's got [a 1.59 ERA] down there,” Lee said. “So this felt like a good opportunity, especially with the 5-0 game, to get his feet wet in a Battle of the Bay game and feel what that's like, especially on the road ... He did a really good job and just turned 15. He's going to be big, tall and pretty damn good.”

Scott French is a contributor to Daily Pilot Sports.

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California State Parks seasonal lifeguard Sierra Fockler discovered a 14-inch Pacific football fish around 2:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 13, near the lifeguard station located at Crystal Cove State Park in Orange County. It's the second such case of the fish washing ashore over the last three years. (Courtesy of California State Parks)

Good morning. It's Wednesday, Oct. 25. I'm Carol Cormaci, bringing you this week's [TimesOC newsletter](#) with a look at the latest local news and events.

Watch where you're stepping on O.C.'s famed sands, because you may encounter a rare specimen of marine life. One, in fact, that has very sharp teeth.

That's what happened on a recent afternoon to lifeguard Sierra Fockler, who found a spooky-looking black angler fish, specifically a Pacific football fish, while she was walking near the lifeguard headquarters building on Moro Beach, located within Crystal Cove State Park.