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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2021 // Times Community News publication serving Orange County // timesoc.com



Juan Tallo | Jamboree Housing Corp.

A RESIDENT VETERAN passes through the Heroes Landing reflection walk designed by Jamboree Housing Corp. at Santa Ana's Heroes Landing.

'This is their community'

Heroes Landing in Santa Ana gives veterans a home base

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

At Santa Ana's Heroes Landing, Orange County's largest permanent supportive housing community exclusively for veterans, a strong community is forming.

The 75 apartment homes, formerly called Santa Ana's Veteran's Village, opened in July 2020 with the goal of creating "a sanctuary of stability and a hub of hope" in collaboration with the Jamboree Housing Corp., the city of Santa Ana and other veteran-focused organizations.

"It is a sanctuary for homeless veterans. It is a place where every aspect of the design had the veteran in mind," said Richard Owens, senior program manager for Jamboree Housing

Corp. and a veteran himself.

Owens served a total of 17 years and was deployed four times, doing tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I did eight years of active duty in the Marine Corps, and I did nine years in the Army Reserve."

Like many Orange County veterans, Owens knows firsthand the struggles that can plague a soldier transitioning back into civilian life.

"Even with the support in place, it still took me 11 years, to connect the dots," Owens said. "Because I still struggle. Even having support in place, I still struggled a lot with transition."

See **Veterans**, page R6



Courtesy of Jamboree Housing Corp.

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES like pumpkin carving are meant to create a sense of camaraderie among the veterans living at Heroes Landing.

Footage sheds light on police shooting

Film was released from a body camera involving a Tustin police officer who fatally shot a homeless man.

BY BEN BRAZIL

Newly released body camera footage released by Tustin police sheds new light on the fatal police shooting of a homeless man who reportedly was suffering from mental health issues.

The footage also reveals how quickly the situation escalated before Luis Manuel Garcia was killed on Aug. 9 near a mobile home community. The time from when the officers first made contact with Garcia to when the fatal gunshots were fired lasted one minute and 17 seconds.

The California Department of Justice is investigating the shooting under Assembly Bill 1506, which requires the department to investigate all police shootings resulting in the death of an unarmed civilian in the state. Orange County Dist. Atty. Todd Spitzer's office is assisting with the investigation.

Tustin police spokeswoman Stephanie Nichols confirmed this week that Estella Silva is the officer who fired the fatal rounds, and all the officers involved in the shooting are still out in the field.

Nichols said she could not comment on the case due to the fact that it could interfere with the state DOJ and D.A. investigations.

Garcia's family has filed a claim for damages against the city in the names of his 12-year-old and 18-year-old daughters. Rosalia Becerra, Garcia's former partner of about 15 years, said she wants to see Silva punished for the shooting.

"We want justice for him and for my girls," Becerra said. "She

See **Camera**, page R6

Santa Ana activists rally against efforts to overturn rent control

Demonstrators marched on the Apartment Assn. of Orange County amid a referendum effort by opponents of rent control.

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

Rent control advocates at Mariposa Park in Santa Ana fastened ropes around buckets in turning them into makeshift drums slung over their shoulders ahead of a planned march on the Apartment Assn. of Orange County. On Monday evening, they readied protest signs and made stump speeches through a bullhorn to all within earshot.

In the two weeks since Santa Ana City Council passed the measure set to curb rent hikes to 3% annually on older apartment complexes and mobile home parks, activists found themselves in a unfamiliar position: defense.

Just three days after the Oct. 19

vote, the California Apartment Assn. announced that they were leading a referendum signature gathering effort on the new rent control and just cause eviction laws.

"Instead of celebrating the victory of City Council passing rent control, we continue fighting," said Idalia Rios, an activist with Vecindario Lacy en Accion, before the crowd. "We know that people power matters more. This years-long fight won't be in vain."

Mextli Lopez, a volunteer activist with Tenants United Santa Ana, followed by vowing to deliver an open letter addressed to the California Apartment Assn. and the Apartment Assn. of Orange County at the end of the march, one that accused canvassers of using "misleading and outright incorrect information" in violation of election code law when approaching registered voters for their signatures.

The letter even claims that can-

vassers have presented themselves as pro-rent control advocates to help their cause.

"Hopefully, we will be able to get the state attorney general and the secretary of state to look into the lies and deception that is going on in Santa Ana by the Apartment Assn. in order to gather as many signatures as they need in a short amount of time to repeal our ordinance," she said. "We know that it's actually illegal what they've been doing. We're going to demand that an investigation take place."

About 40 demonstrators marched down Fourth Street as Santa Ana Police Department patrol cars slowly crawled behind the crowd. Activists arrived to find the Apartment Assn. of Orange County closed and its exterior business sign covered up. They quickly claimed the organization did so in anticipation of the their signatures.

See **Rent**, page R4



Photos by Don Leach | Staff Photographer

ACTIVISTS WITH Tenants United Santa Ana begin their march last Monday on the Apartment Assn. of Orange County.



IDALIA RIOS speaks on a bullhorn about rent control policy with fellow activists.

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Judge rules Anaheim's living-wage law doesn't apply to Disneyland

BY GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

A Superior Court judge ruled against Disneyland Resort workers in a class-action lawsuit challenging the company's exemption from an Anaheim living-wage law.

Passed by voters in 2018, Measure L requires hospitality businesses within the Anaheim Resort area to pay a tiered minimum wage topping at \$18 an hour next year if they have tax rebate subsidy agreements with the city.

On Monday, Orange County Superior Court Judge William D. Claster granted a summary judgment in favor of the Disneyland Resort stating that a Disney expansion agreement passed by the city in 1996 didn't meet the legal definition of a tax rebate subsidy under the living-wage law.

"The court is confronted with a narrow question: whether any of the agreements identified by the parties gives the Disney Defendants a right to a rebate of their taxes," read Claster's tentative Oct. 29 ruling. "Whether the city of Anaheim 'subsidized' the Disney Defendants in a colloquial sense is not an issue."

Before going to trial, Claster ruled that the '96 agreement, in which the city issued \$510 million in bonds for resort-area infrastructure improvements in partnership with Disney's \$1.4-billion investment in Disney's California Adventure, Downtown Disney and Disney's Grand Californian Hotel, didn't constitute the tax refund, abatement or discount needed to trigger the living-wage law.

Anaheim continues to



Robert Gauthier | Los Angeles Times

THE FIRST PARK visitors are greeted by cast members inside Disneyland as the theme park reopens for the first time in more than a year on April 30, 2021.

pay off bond debt, mostly through sales, property and transient occupancy taxes generated by the Disneyland Resort as part of the '96 agreement.

"The finance agreement has the apparent effect of giving the Disney Defendants a 100% abatement on debt service payments, not taxes," read Claster's tentative ruling. "This is a significant benefit to the Disney Defendants, but again, there is no evidence that the finance agreement somehow lessens their tax obligations."

Randy Renick, an attorney representing the workers in the class-action suit, criticized the decision.

"We disagree with the court's narrow reading of Measure L and believe Monday's ruling eviscerates the 2018 vote to adopt a living wage in Anaheim," he said. "The plaintiffs are considering all their options, including appeal. It's disappointing that Disney



Glenn Koenig | Los Angeles Times

JUDGE WILLIAM D. CLASTER ruled that the lease agreement for the Mickey and Friends parking structure didn't make the living-wage law applicable to Disney.

can take hundreds of millions of dollars from the city of Anaheim and yet refuse to pay over 25,000 workers a living wage."

Anaheim also financed the construction of the \$108-million Mickey and Friends parking structure in the expansion and leases it to Disney for \$1

per year, an agreement that attorneys unsuccessfully argued subjects it to the living-wage law.

Two more recent tax rebate agreements didn't go before Claster; the Disneyland Resort asked Anaheim City Council to shred

See *Disney*, page R4



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

CRAIG LASKY and America Sanchez take a bicycle ride at Mary's Kitchen in Orange on July 13.

Mary's Kitchen eviction delayed due to homeless safety concerns

BY BEN BRAZIL

A judge has blocked the city of Orange from evicting Mary's Kitchen for six months due to concerns that the homeless people who rely on the nonprofit would be put at risk as the pandemic continues and rainy season begins.

During that time, the nonprofit will search for a new location.

Mary's Kitchen has been fighting to stay open since the city sent Mary's Kitchen a letter in June terminating its license agreement three years early. The nonprofit has been operating in Orange since the mid-1980s and has been at its current location, 517 W. Struck Ave., since 1994. Orange was aiming to shut the nonprofit down in mid-September until U.S. District Judge David O. Carter granted a temporary restraining order.

A nonprofit driven by donations and volunteers, hundreds have come to rely on the various services that Mary's Kitchen offers, which include three meals, six days a week, to anyone who seeks them out. Clothing, showers and laundry facilities are available, and

the nonprofit receives mail for hundreds of people.

"With respect to intent, the city has offered no compelling reason to justify the termination of critical services," Carter wrote in his Tuesday court ruling. "The city has not proffered any plan or need to use the site immediately for a different purpose, and the purported increase in crime appears to have little basis ... Having worked with Mary's Kitchen for almost 30 years, the city is well aware of the critical services offered by the organization and the lack of alternatives."

The city contends that the nonprofit has become a magnet for crime and doesn't fit into a continuum of care approach to solving homelessness, identified as a "comprehensive regional" strategy. However, Carter noted in his decision that the city has not provided sufficient evidence of a connection between Mary's Kitchen and the criminal activity in the area.

Carter wrote in his court filing that the city has the right to prematurely end the licensing agreement due to a termination clause

See *Mary's*, page R6

Los Alamitos-based Army division shifts its focus to urban warfare

A weeklong course concentrates on the potential of defending densely populated cities.

BY DANIEL LANGHORNE

The 40th Infantry Division headquartered in Los Alamitos recently hosted the U.S. Army's first week-long urban warfare course as the service shifts its focus to potentially fighting in densely populated cities.

As China increasingly flexes its military power in the Western Pacific region, American soldiers who have seen nearly 20 years of fighting in the deserts of the Middle East and mountains of Afghanistan could be called upon to help defend Taiwan or the Philippines.

"If the Army plans for urban operations, our adversaries won't think urban environments are a sanctuary for them," said Brig. Gen. Robert Wooldridge, deputy commanding general for the 40th Infantry Division headquartered at Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos.

Maj. Gen. Laura Yeager, commanding general of the 40th Infantry Division, and Wooldridge have led the charge on urban warfare training partly because they could be called upon to

fight in an all-out war with the People's Liberation Army.

While the U.S. Army has long maintained its Ranger and Mountain Warfare schools, urban warfare has no equivalent training center in the service.

Wooldridge underscored his division's readiness to fight wherever and whenever they're called, but he still wants to do everything possible to avoid some of the casualties U.S. forces will endure fighting in megacities.

"If the Army doesn't conduct specialized training for urban warfare prior to the next conflict, I'm sure that the American soldier will adapt to the requirements of the urban fight and still prevail," Wooldridge said. "The problem with adapting under fire is that usually ends up costing more soldiers' lives than if we had trained to succeed in that environment prior to conflict ... so I'm not interested in losing soldiers while they have to learn lessons the hard way."

Another eye-opening moment was the California National Guard's activation of nearly 10,000 service members amid the civil unrest following the police killing of George Floyd, Wooldridge said. Soldiers with the 40th Infantry Division

were dispatched to help law enforcement protect private property and critical infrastructure in Los Angeles County, San Francisco and Sacramento. Some troops were on the streets within four hours of the call from Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti.

Although the National Guard's domestic role is starkly different from combat, some of the lessons can be applied when training for future conflicts in megacities. Soldiers in downtown Sacramento had to stay aware of anyone observing them from parking structures and eight- and nine-story buildings, Wooldridge said.

Military leaders also have to be aware of the hazards of sending troops into dense neighborhoods where they are vastly outnumbered by civilians, he said.

Besides classroom-based learning, the Urban Warfare Planners cohort spent Monday at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin with active-duty army units talking through urban warfare training gaps that could be provided by the National Guard.

Among the internationally renowned experts who visited Los Alamitos this

See *Army*, page R4



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TimesOC

A Times Community News publication serving Orange County

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TimesOC is published Sundays by Times Community News, a division of the Los Angeles Times. Subscriptions are available only by subscribing to The Times, Orange County.

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“ I chose to fight,
so I came to Hoag.”

SARAH'S STORY



An ER Doctor Fights — and Defeats — Breast Cancer During Pandemic

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Tustin mayor champions diversity in her book

BY SARAH MOSQUEDA

Letitia Clark, mayor of Tustin and a mother of three, was not sure her kids truly understood her job.

"I have twins, they are 14 now, but when I first ran for office they were 8," Clark said.

They accompanied her to meetings and understood that as a city council member, Mommy was busy.

"As they started to get more interested in what Mommy was doing and why," Clark said. "I realized that even though they were with me a lot and close to me, they still didn't have a good understanding of all the behind-the-scenes things I did as a city council person and now as the mayor."

Clark, who was selected by her Tustin City Council peers to serve as mayor for the 2021 calendar year, found that many adults also were not familiar with the breadth of her duties.

"When I got selected as mayor, even talking about the process that I wasn't elected but appointed by my colleagues to be the mayor, adults were like, 'Well, how does that work?'" Clark said.

Clark set out to write a children's book that would explain her role to not only children but the adults reading the book to them as well. "I thought the book could be a good conversa-



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

LETITIA CLARK, mayor of Tustin and a mother of three, wrote a children's book about the role of a mayor, the importance of community engagement and diversity in government.

tion starter for families," she said.

Clark tapped Halo Publishing International for her project and worked on the book during the pandemic.

"I knew I was going to do the self-publishing route. Halo Publishing specializes in children's books and they helped me locate the illustrator."

Clark said she worked closely with the illustrator, Sarah K. Turner, about the details of her characters.

"We talked about how we wanted the skin color to be, the hair styles, just the feel

of the book," Clark said. "And I wrote all the stanzas in the book, but then the editor had input about how it should flow."

The result is a full-color, rhyming children's book for kids ages 5 to 10 titled, "Mommy is the Mayor." The book explores the role of the city mayor through the eyes of children.

"The book was really inspired by my kids being inquisitive and then also making sure my kids know how serious the job is," Clark said. "It is not just going to fun events and doing

ribbon cuttings ... there is a lot of work and everything that they see in their community is impacted by what I do and what me and my colleagues do."

The book also touches on the need for representation and the importance of demonstrations of role modeling for children of color.

"What I learned was that only 12% of children's books feature people of color," Clark said, "I am happy to add to that percentage."

In 2018, publishing statistics compiled by the Co-

operative Children's Book Center, School of Education found that only 10% of characters in children's books were depicted as African or African American. The study found the majority of children's book characters were portrayed as white (50%) or as an animal or other non-human character (27%).

Clark understands the need for children to see themselves in their role models because she found her way into city government after seeing women like herself making a difference.

Clark earned her bachelor of arts degree in political science from the Xavier University of Louisiana, and she began her career in New Orleans.

"When I was in New Orleans I thought I wanted to study law. It wasn't until I started to work on some Black women's campaigns ... They are running for mayor and running for Senate and they are winning. And they look like me," Clark said, "And here I am 19, 20 years old, seeing that for the first time and it completely changed what I wanted to do in my career. At that time the ceiling for me was a lawyer because that was all I had observed."

While working in New Orleans, Clark witnessed Hurricane Katrina and saw first hand the role city gov-

ernment can play for a community in need.

"I just grew a really great respect and appreciation for local government and our responsibility to people," Clark said. "At the end of the day, when it was time to respond to the disaster it was the mayor, the city council, not the governor, not the president ... they came in way later."

The book speaks to her personal experience and she feels the impact it is having.

"I am already getting back what I hoped I would," Clark said. "As people are learning about the role of a mayor, they are being inspired by all the things our local government does and then they are seeing a woman of color in the book."

So what do her children think about their mother's job now?

"What has resonated most with my kids is they see service as a part of just what we do," Clark said. "They may not want to go into politics or government but whatever they do, I know they will want to volunteer and they will want to get involved."

Clark will be doing a book-signing event at Barnes & Noble in Tustin on Nov. 20.

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RENT

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march and any possible media coverage.

David Cordero, executive director of the Apartment Assn. of Orange County, didn't respond to those claims, but did criticize Santa Ana City Council for what he deemed a "rushed" vote without "meaningful outreach" to the community or rental-housing providers.

"Santa Ana for Fair and Equitable Housing is collecting signatures so the

voters can ultimately decide if these policies are right for Santa Ana," he said. "This is the democratic process — letting the people decide what they want for their community. Hostile efforts to stop the people from having a say and blocking voters from expressing their desire and right to have a free and fair election are shameful and contrary to our country's values."

Gilbert Sanchez, a Santa Ana resident who attended both the march and past City Council meetings where rent control was dis-

cussed, recalls an encounter with a canvasser two weeks ago outside a Target store. The man claimed just cause eviction protections wouldn't allow landlords to boot tenants who played loud music.

"That's where I stopped him," he said in arguing that not to be the case. "As soon as I told him I went to the council meetings, he dropped me like a hot potato."

Santa Ana for Fair and Equitable Housing, which is sponsored by the California Apartment Assn., has until Nov. 20 to collect 12,500 sig-

natures, which is about 10% of all registered voters in the city. If enough qualifying signatures are submitted by deadline, City Council can either consider repealing the ordinances themselves or send them before the voters.

The council would have to decide whether to have the referendum vote slated for a special election or during a general election cycle. During the interim period between the verification of submitted signatures and the referendum election, there would also be a stay on rent control and just cause eviction protections.

Johnathan Ryan Hernandez, a Santa Ana councilman who voted for both ordinances, attended Monday's demonstration but didn't address the crowd.

In an interview, he noted having seen filmed encounters residents and activists have had with canvassers and asked Santa Ana City Atty. Sonia Carvalho to respond to allegations of election code violations while also reaching out to state Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta over the matter.

Should the petition qualify, Hernandez doesn't plan on changing his vote and doesn't expect three other colleagues supportive of rent control, including Mayor Vicente Sarmiento, will, either.

"The need and the demand for rent control is real," he said. "This isn't snap-finger politics or just the progressive thing to do,



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

A SUPPORTER of Tenants United Santa Ana bangs on a drum as she holds a sign that translates to "having a roof is a right."

it's the right thing to do. It's just a matter of making sure that we do everything that we can to combat the lies and deceit in the community."

A day after the demonstration, the issue of rent control briefly turned back to City Council.

Councilwoman Nelida Mendoza asked staff to consider a future presentation on the advantages and disadvantages of the policy during the Nov. 2 meeting.

"I would like to see about getting neutral experts in the area of urban planning to give some information to the public," she said. "I know that the issue has already passed so it doesn't have anything to do with voting. It's more to inform the public of benefits, disadvantages and unintended consequences of the rent control issue."

At the end of the meeting, Sarmiento addressed

the canvasser controversy by directing Carvalho to look at remedial measures in cases where some referendum signatures may have been gathered illegally.

"People can be easily misled into signing something that isn't clear and isn't represented well," Sarmiento said. "I respect everybody's right to be able to gather signatures so long as they're gathered legally."

The mayor also commended the City Clerk's office for working on a template form letter for registered voters in the city who may seek to have their signature rescinded if they felt a canvasser misled them.

Santa Ana's rent control law, the only of its kind in Orange County, is slated to go into effect on Nov. 19.

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ARMY

Continued from page R2

week was John W. Spencer, a career infantry soldier and chair of Urban Warfare Studies at the Modern War Institute.

By teaching the urban planner course, the 40th Infantry Division will quickly become the Army's urban operations planning experts, Spencer said.

DISNEY

Continued from page R2

them in the leadup to Measure L's victory at the ballot box.

In 2015, Anaheim council members voted to extend a decades-long entertainment tax moratorium for the corporation.

Under the policy, if a future council levied an admission tax on parkgoers, Disney would receive a full refund.

The following year, a council majority also approved \$267 million in transient occupancy tax rebates over 20 years for a planned Disney luxury hotel.

After council members unanimously voted to terminate both agreements at Disney's request, Anaheim

"What the 40th [Infantry Division] has put together is the first course I've ever attended or been a part of addressing the unique challenges, considerations, history and best practices of conducting military operations in urban areas," Spencer said. "This event is truly revolutionary."

In a city where there could be up to 40,000 residents per square mile, the Army needs to train sol-

diers to do as little damage as possible while winning the fight, Wooldridge said.

"I hope we never have to use this, but if we're planning to take back some city in the Indo-Pacific region maybe some staff officer or planner will think back to the course and say, 'Thank God we went through this,'" he said.

DANIEL LANGHORNE is a contributor to TimesOC.

City Atty. Robert Fabela issued a nonbinding legal opinion ahead of the 2018 election that positioned the remaining '96 Disneyland expansion deal outside the bounds of a "tax rebate" as defined in the living wage law.

"We have always been committed to fair and equitable pay for our cast members but have always agreed with the Anaheim City Attorney's conclusion that Measure L does not apply to the Disneyland Resort," said a Disneyland spokesperson in a shared statement. "We are pleased the court has confirmed that position."

The city also sees Cluster's summary judgment as affirming.

"While we never want to see a dispute like this play

out in court, we appreciate the judge's determination," said Mike Lyster, Anaheim spokesman. "It validates what we already knew and have said the city of Anaheim does not provide any rebate or subsidy to Disney."

Anaheim's living-wage law currently applies to a trio of nonunion hotels in its resort area including the Westin, the Anaheim Hotel and J.W. Marriott.

The DoubleTree Suites was the first business in Anaheim subject to the law in 2019, but its transient occupancy tax rebate agreement with the city ended in April, making Measure L no longer applicable.

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CAMERA

Continued from page R1

took away the possibility of my girls having a father. She took away the opportunity for him to get out of the hole that he was in. We want to see justice. We want to see her behind bars. That's what we're looking for."

The recently released footage from the police department begins with a call from a resident that led to the police response. The caller reports that her neighbor had seen a homeless man two days prior living in the bushes near the Saddleback Mobilodge community at 15401 Williams St. She says he had a "big, huge steak knife."

When the dispatcher asks if the woman had seen the knife that day and whether he was holding or pointing it at people, the resident says she last saw him with the knife the day before. The resident describes the homeless man as a white male in his 30s with blond hair.

The footage then shows the police response to the mobile home park around 10 a.m. as officers confront Garcia in English and Spanish. During the exchange, Garcia says he's collecting recyclables and is seen carrying a plastic bag and a



Courtesy of the Garcia family

LUIS MANUEL GARCIA was shot and killed on Aug. 9 by Tustin police.

long stick-like object.

Near the end of the footage, Silva unholsters her gun and tells Garcia to get his hands up. As he exits the bushes, another officer fires a stun gun at Garcia, who yells and steps back into the bushes. Then as he steps forward, Silva fires two shots at him. Garcia drops his stick and tries to run but is thrown into the bushes by a third officer.

The footage then cuts out and comes back in after Garcia is handcuffed and on the ground, still conscious.

When Silva asks whether he still has a knife, Garcia responds, "Everything is fine."

"Everything is going to be OK," Garcia says. "It hurts

me. It hurts me. It hurts me. It hurts me."

The footage cuts out shortly after and says that Garcia was transported to a local hospital, where he died from his injuries.

Police said in the video that Garcia had a wooden pole with him. The footage also includes several police photos of the pole, which has no sharp edges on it.

Nichols said she could not comment on whether a knife was found on Garcia or at the scene of the incident due to the ongoing investigations. No knife is shown in the video, only the pole.

Tustin police's initial description of the incident said that the department received a call from a local resident about a suspicious male, but it failed to mention that the resident described a man who didn't fit Garcia's description. Police also didn't mention that the resident was reporting an incident from days prior. In describing what led up to the shooting, Tustin police said that the "suspect quickly came out of the bushes, advancing on the officers."

"There's too many things that don't add up," Becerra said about the footage. "To begin with, the person that made the call described him as somebody else. She describes him as a white male. He's not white, he's

Hispanic. She also mentions he has white hair. He had no hair. So to me right there, she's describing a different person."

A spokesperson for California Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta's office declined to provide comment due to the ongoing investigation. District attorney's office spokeswoman Kimberly Edds said all requests for comment should be directed to the attorney general "as it is their investigation."

Michael Carrillo, an attorney representing Garcia's family, said over the phone that the shooting was unjustified.

"There was no threat that he was going to hit her with a stick or with a pole," Carrillo said. "There had been a call about a knife a day before. So to resort to deadly force so quickly, I felt was just so inappropriate. I mean, this is a mentally ill man and they should have handled him with more care."

Becerra said Garcia's mental health issues started worsening after he became homeless after their relationship ended about six years ago. Becerra said that she kept in touch with Garcia while he was homeless because of their daughters. The family tried to help him, but he wanted to do things on his own.

"He was like a friend,

MORE ONLINE

For a longer version of this story, which includes further details about the exchange between police and Luis Manuel Garcia and efforts throughout Orange County to reduce confrontations between police and the mentally ill, visit dailypilot.com.

somebody you can joke around with all the time," Becerra described him. "He was very lovable. He was very caring for his girls. He used to love them so much, they were his world."

Jennifer Rojas, policy advocate and organizer with the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, said Garcia's death was a "tragic loss" and another example of excessive force being used against people experiencing homelessness and mental illness.

"When police shoot and kill someone who is experiencing homelessness or mental illness, it really just makes super clear the systemic failure of our community to provide social services that would have benefited Luis Manuel Garcia, like supportive housing and mental health treatment," Rojas said. "When it comes to people experiencing homelessness and men-

tal illness, police do not make our community safer."

Rojas pointed to the fact that AB 1506 took effect in July, and the state is already investigating two cases of unarmed civilians killed by police in Orange County.

The other case is the Anaheim police killing of Brandon Lopez, the cousin of Santa Ana Councilman Johnathan Hernandez. Lopez was killed on Sept. 28 after a car chase and hours-long standoff with police at a construction area on Santa Ana Boulevard in Santa Ana. Lopez was allegedly driving a stolen car and was wanted for armed robberies. Similar to Garcia, Hernandez has said Lopez was suffering from a mental health crisis and Anaheim police unnecessarily escalated the situation. Santa Ana Mayor Vicente Sarmiento criticized police for acting like "a firing squad" in Lopez's shooting.

A week after the killing, the Santa Ana City Council unanimously approved a contract with homeless service provider CityNet to provide street outreach and care to homeless people, particularly those suffering with mental illness. The pilot program will steer these calls for service away from the police department.

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VETERANS

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Owens stayed with family after active duty and was able to find employment as a teacher, but a study put out in 2016 by USC's School of Social Work called "The State of the American Veteran" inspired him to change course.

"When I saw that, I felt called to work with homeless veterans," Owens said. "I was like, 'I am veteran I have had my own issues,' and this was when I was starting connect my dots and see my dots ... I wanted to give back to the community, I wanted to help my fellow brothers and sisters to get back on their feet."

He left teaching and started on a path that led him to Heroes Landing Community Collaborative, making it possible for O.C. veterans to find permanent homes.

Founded in 1990, Jamboree Housing Corp. is a nonprofit that started with a \$1-million federal grant awarded to aid in the development of a first-time homebuyers' program in Irvine. The goal was to create more housing opportunities for low-income families and seniors. Heroes Landing is Jamboree's first property exclusively for veterans.

Besides providing permanent housing, Heroes Landing also offers onsite supportive services.

"Working and speaking to veteran service providers, we saw that it's not one thing that veterans need, there are multiple issues and barriers that individuals face when they are coming out of homelessness and they become

housed," Owens said. "We wanted to create a services collaborative that addressed multiple issues. In order to do that we have five services provided on site."

VA Long Beach Healthcare System, Goodwill of Orange County's Tierney Center for Veterans Services, Veterans Legal Institute, Strength in Support and Step Up all have offices open and available to residents at Heroes Landing.

"Every unit at Heroes Landing is a part of the Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing, or VASH," Owens said. "That means that every veteran here has a social worker assigned to them, and they work through a series of different goals."

Strength in Support provides individual and group counseling outside of the Veterans Administration, which Owens notes is important because of the aversion some vets have to working with the VA.

"Some veterans have a stigma toward the VA, either they don't trust the VA or they are just not comfortable sharing with the VA," Owens said. "Strength in Support is there and they are able to meet those behavioral mental health needs that veterans have without having to go to the VA ... Their feelings toward the VA wouldn't be a barrier to them getting the help they need."

The Tierney Center for Veterans Services operated by Goodwill Orange County helps with education and employment benefits.

"They will help vets get resumes prepared, help with job searches, help with getting connected to VA education benefits and enrolling in school," Owens

said.

The Veterans Legal Institute provides pro-bono legal services for veterans, helping with pending legal issues the unhoused can face, like evictions or tickets issued to those living on the streets.

"The biggest thing, especially for our veterans, is discharge upgrades," Owens said. "The Veterans Legal Institute will work with veterans to get their discharge upgraded to another level, especially if they had something other than honorable discharge."

Step Up assists with community events, making sure residents feel at home and a part of the community.

"Step Up helps with daily living skills, and they put on different classes ... cooking classes, nutrition classes, they help coordinate yoga, and all these things that help the quality of life and make the day to day better," Owens said.

When COVID-19 threatened their community last year, Owens said the VA Long Beach Healthcare System stepped in.

"We had nurses come on site and they hosted COVID-19 testing and COVID-19 vaccine clinics," Owens said. "They are not just bringing the social workers, but they get multiple elements of the Veterans Affairs Hospital here at Heroes Landing. Instead of the veterans having to go to the hospital, they are bringing it to them."

The collaborative atmosphere was particularly helpful during the pandemic hit, Owens said. "We have had less than 10 active COVID cases onsite."

With each case, the individual quarantined and was delivered food and water



Courtesy of Jamboree Housing Corp.

A RECENT JOB FAIR, hosted at Heroes Landing by Jamboree and its Community Collaborative service partners, connected veterans with employment resources.

and all the support they needed to get better.

"We would do daily checks by phone or by knocking on their door, to interact with them, to keep them engaged, to let them know we are here and we care about them," Owens said.

The community garden club also helped keep morale strong.

"One of our biggest successes over the last year has been our garden club, and it really helped during COVID because it provided an opportunity for people to get outside, to safely socially engage with their neighbors," Owens said. "It gave people a purpose."

Residents signed up for jobs like watering, weeding and pruning. Heroes Landing recently hosted a barbecue in which residents got to dine on some of the veggies they have grown.

"All the side, all the vegetables were locally grown things from our garden and the garden club was really excited to present that to the community."

Owens said the sense of community created by the residents and services is what makes Heroes Landing successful.

"Again it goes back to the fact that we all collaborate, we all work together to get the messaging out on the importance of safety and taking care of community," Owens said. "And I think that is the key thing there. Veterans really see that this is their community, it is a place that they can call home and they take a lot of pride in that."

The services onsite at Heroes Landing are not just open to residents but any Orange County Veterans. More information about their housing opportunities

and services can be found at the Heroes Landing webpage at bit.ly/2ZY71ug. Jamboree Housing Corp. is currently developing a second permanent supportive housing property in Santa Ana, North Harbor Village, for formerly homeless veterans and those with special needs.

Owens said Heroes Landing can be the first step to major change.

"This is one part of ending veteran homelessness in Orange County," Owens said. "Our hope is that other providers and developers will see how successful this is and create a new model on how we are providing services, not just to our homeless veterans but to all of our homeless population in general."

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MARY'S

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included in the text. However, he granted preliminary relief in the form of preventing the eviction until May 1 due to the risk to the unhoused population and the city's inadequate plan to transition away from the nonprofit, which Carter called "a plan of ideas."

The city's plan centered on connecting homeless clients of Mary's Kitchen to a few surrounding shelters within two weeks while partnering with the county and local nonprofits for other services.

"However, the current plan does not ensure that unhoused individuals receive comparable critical services, particularly given the onset of the rainy season and continuing pandemic," Carter wrote of the city's plan. "The city's current proposal is an outline that lacks concrete and workable actions."

Last week, Brooke Weitzman, an attorney representing Mary's Kitchen, criticized the city's plan, calling it "no plan at all" in a court filing.

Carter, echoing those

sentiments, pointed out that the city committed to connecting homeless people to housing within two weeks, when it can regularly take two years to do that. Also, the shelters the city was planning on sending people to — HomeAid Orange County, Be Well Orange County, Buena Park Navigation Center, Placentia Navigation Center and Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center — have either several restrictions for who can enter or have few or no beds available.

Carter also wrote that the city's plan to provide food to the homeless "pales in comparison" to the hot meals provided by Mary's Kitchen. That part of the plan included a food truck and distributing a list of food pantries. He also said that the city's proposal to replace the mail services provided by the nonprofit would cause homeless people to miss paychecks, benefit payments and medication.

The city's plan also relied on connecting homeless people with other organizations, like 2-1-1 Orange County. But Carter wrote that the organization doesn't provide services in Orange except to connect

people with Mary's Kitchen.

The city also claimed to have partnered with the county to provide medical services up to three times per week for the homeless. However, Carter said a county spokesperson said the city made no request and the county doesn't plan on increasing its medical services.

"First, the city has provided no evidence that any of the food providers listed have agreed to participate in the transition plan," Carter wrote. "Second, the flier that the city plans to hand out almost exclusively lists food pantries. The city confirmed at argument that half of those pantries are open in the same time slot on Wednesdays, meaning unhoused people could not visit more than one. Even if unhoused individuals can access these pantries, the pantries offer predominantly frozen and uncooked food, which is not workable for unhoused people without access to cooking facilities."

He continued: "If the critical services currently provided by Mary's Kitchen are removed without adequate replacement during the rainy season, Orange's unhoused residents will

face substantial risks to their health and their ability to obtain food and mail."

Carter decided on the six-month timetable because Gloria Suess, who leads Mary's Kitchen, said in an email to the city in 2019 that it would take the nonprofit five to six months to relocate and move all of its equipment. Carter also said six months is a sufficient amount of time for the city to find a way to replace the services provided by Mary's Kitchen.

Carter said that when Mary's Kitchen closed many of its services in early 2020 due to the pandemic, the city experienced record death rates in its homeless population. Orange County had its most homeless deaths on record that year and it is on pace to eclipse that record again this year.

There is significant community and political support for Mary's Kitchen. An online petition to save Mary's Kitchen has garnered more than 8,700 signatures and state Sen. Dave Min and Assemblywoman Sharon Quirk-Silva have come to the defense of the nonprofit.

"The city is pleased that the court did not give Mary's Kitchen the 18 to 24

months Mary's Kitchen requested," Seymour Everett, an attorney representing the city, said in an emailed statement. "It is unfortunate Mary's Kitchen refused to work with the city and avoid litigation when it rejected the three additional months the city offered Mary's Kitchen to transition from city property. The city's transition plan provided the services necessary to transition Mary's Kitchen from the city property and help the unhoused get into shelters to receive the care they need."

"Although the city is pleased the court did not provide Mary's Kitchen 18 to 24 months to vacate the city property, the city is concerned about the legal reasoning for the court's ruling and is considering all of its legal options. The city remains committed to helping the homeless by working with surrounding cities, community partners and the county. The city is working with community partners and homeless shelters to improve the lives of the unhoused by preventing crime, encampments and physical and mental abuse. It is the goal of the city to work with community partners to

break the cycle of homelessness and work within the system to get people off the street into homeless shelters to provide them with the help they need to improve their standard of living."

Weitzman said Tuesday the decision is a relief to the homeless who rely on Mary's Kitchen.

"It's certainly great that the court recognized that the plan for the city of Orange was no plan at all and would put lives in immediate danger," Weitzman said. "In terms of the timeline, we will see over the next few months how that goes, and whether the city takes any steps to prepare to provide services."

Weitzman said Mary's Kitchen is actively looking for a new location. The challenge the nonprofit is facing is finding a spot where they can still serve homeless people in Orange.

"If they move to a different location that was too far, while they might serve a different set of a few hundred people, it will be harmful to the people who rely on them now," Weitzman said.

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