

Daily Pilot

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2021 /// Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent /// dailypilot.com



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

TERRY WELSH, president of Banning Ranch Conservancy, holds proof of an \$8-million donation to turn Banning Ranch into a county public park.

Banning Ranch purchase gets an \$8-million boost

BY LILLY NGUYEN

The acquisition of Banning Ranch remains within reach as conservationists received a ceremonial check representing \$8 million Thursday from state officials to help purchase the 384-acre oil field.

The \$8 million comes out of the state budget, which legislators secured in June to be put toward the purchase of the property. Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris (D-Laguna Beach) handed off the check to officials from the Banning Ranch Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land, accompanied by Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley and Costa Mesa Councilwoman Arlis Reynolds.

“Forever protecting Banning Ranch is a once-in-a-generation opportunity,” Petrie-Norris said in a statement. “This project will restore vital coastal wetlands, provide unparalleled coastal access for surrounding underserved communities and preserve this jewel for all Southern Californians to enjoy.”

Paolo Perrone, project manager for Southern California region of the Trust for Public Land, said the \$8 million is part of the existing \$83 million raised to date — \$14 million short of the \$97 million needed for the property.

The organization currently holds an exclusive agreement with the property holders of Banning Ranch to purchase the land. Conservationists have until April to raise the total amount and, upon doing so, will then be able to convey the land to a public agency to turn the oil field into and be maintained as a public park.

About \$50 million was donated by New-

See **Banning**, page A3

Orange County Power Authority expands

More than 100,000 residents of unincorporated areas will be able to utilize the community choice energy option in 2022.

BY MATT SZABO

The Orange County Power Authority has expanded its grasp as the community choice energy program readies itself to launch service in 2022.

The Community Choice Energy program, which was formed as an alternative to Southern California Edison and promises cleaner power at stable rates, announced that the County of Orange has entered into the OCPA Joint Powers Agreement.

This means that unincorporated areas of the county, like Coto de Caza, Emerald Bay and Midway City, will be able to participate in OCPA's electricity service and sustainability programs.

Residents and businesses in the county's unincorporated areas join OCPA's current member cities of

See **Power**, page A4

Drivers OK agreement, ending sanitation walkout

The strike ends on the eighth day, with workers in Huntington Beach and Anaheim approving a contract with Republic Services.

BY SARA CARDINE

Republic Services sanitation workers in Huntington Beach and Anaheim went back to work Friday, ending an eight-day strike over unfair labor practices after members of Teamsters Local 396 voted to ratify a tentative agreement with the Phoenix-based company.

The move comes after council members in both cities took action to resume collection as trash piled up at homes and businesses during the work stoppage.

Anaheim officials approved a contingency plan early last week that allowed for the resumption of some services at homes and critical businesses, while the Huntington Beach City Council on Tuesday declared a local emergency, approving an alternative plan to mitigate disruption in service.

See **Strike**, page A2

Orange County records first case of Omicron variant

BY LILLY NGUYEN

The Orange County Health Care Agency announced Friday the arrival of the first case of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 in the county.

County health officials said the individual is an adult male who tested positive for the Omicron variant after domestic travel outside of the state of California. The man, who is fully vaccinated, experienced mild illness. Officials are currently following up on individuals that may have had close contact with him.

Experts believe the Omicron variant, first identified by South African scientists in November, is spreading so quickly that it may soon overtake the Delta variant as the dominant strain this winter, but it is still unclear what the severity of this variant will be.

“The Omicron variant is highly transmissible and has already been identified in the United States and many countries around

See **Omicron**, page A3



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

SHOPPERS LEAVE the Target along Harbor Boulevard in Costa Mesa. The Orange County Health Care Agency announced Friday the arrival of the first case of the Omicron variant in the county.

Orange County housing market sees 3.5% decline in sales as prices continue to rise

BY PRISCELLA VEGA

Fewer homes are being sold in Orange County as prices continue to rise, illuminating a dearth in real estate inventory leading into 2023.

From November 2020 to November 2021, overall home sales decreased in the county by 3.5%, according to data released Thursday by real estate firm DQNews. Preliminary data show prices peaked in October with an average price of \$920,000. The median price of homes increased by nearly 15% in the one-year period, up from \$800,000 to \$919,000.

Data show that the median home prices in the Southern California region peaked at \$693,500 in November.

Some economists expect home price appreciation will

slow to single digits next year, in part because they expect mortgage rates will rise.

That could be more likely to happen after the Federal Reserve on Wednesday announced more aggressive plans to fight inflation, but for now average mortgage interest rates remain in the low 3% range.

In addition to low borrowing costs, other factors helped create today's competitive market with fast-rising prices: the pandemic, low inventory, record-low mortgage rates, and an influx of millennials interested in becoming first-time homebuyers.

The intensity prompted some prospective shoppers to put their search on hold after dueling in bidding wars. And some traded the city for a suburban or rural communities in search for more open space, affordable

housing and a sense of community, according to a study released this year from the non-partisan California Policy Lab.

Steven Thomas, chief economist who tracks the Southern California market at Reports on Housing, said Friday that spring is typically the time houses are placed on the market with plans to go into escrow and close over summer. Then, it starts to slow down around the holidays.

The housing inventory was already low prior to the pandemic lockdown in 2020, but then came the “perfect storm,” which exacerbated the issue, Thomas said.

Normally, he explained, the new year in the Orange County real estate market begins with about 5,000 available homes. But that isn't the case this coming new year.

“The available homes on the



Scott Smeltzer | Staff Photographer

A HOME FOR sale at 6801 Jardines Drive in Huntington Beach.

market is right around the lowest level I've seen,” Thomas said, who's been monitoring data for over 30 years. “It's 1,259 as of this morning. That's nothing on the market.”

In order to see a cool down in demand, he said interest rates

must rise above 4% to allow more inventory.

Los Angeles Times reporter Andrew Khouri contributed to this report.

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STRIKE

Continued from page A1

Huntington Beach Public Works Director Sean Crumby said Friday the city would have been able to seek service from another hauler during the strike and be compensated by Republic Services.

"The declaration of emergency was done to provide the highest number of options for the city manager and allow the city to respond quickly as the situation evolved," he said. "We had contingency plans to step in and provide service, and we would have done that as soon as this weekend."

Instead, drivers returned to their routes early Friday morning.

Adan Alvarez, communications director for Teamsters Local 396, said talks with Republic Services resumed Tuesday after bargaining sessions scheduled for last week were canceled due to the strike.

A tentative agreement was reached Wednesday, as some 420 waste haulers continued to march in picket lines at facilities in Huntington Beach and Anaheim.

"That tentative agreement was ratified by members in Anaheim and Huntington Beach yesterday evening," Alvarez said Friday. "And workers are back to work today."

Employees authorized a strike in a Nov. 23 vote, claiming the company failed to address issues such as excessive work hours, the use of temporary nonunion workers and harassment by managers on the job.

After managers allegedly leveled threats at employees who spoke to the media or appeared in photos following the vote, and offered bonuses without consulting union representatives, a strike was called on Dec. 9.

Huntington Beach officials by Monday had set up five alternate sites



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

WORKERS PICKET outside a Huntington Beach Republic Services facility Dec. 9, the first day of an eight-day strike.

where residents and businesses could drop off their refuse, including the city's Public Works yard.

Employees were stationed at the Public Works yard, Edison and Murdy community centers, Greer Park and the parking lot of Meadowlark Golf Club, where they worked nine-hour shifts and used equipment loaders to help with bulky items.

Crumby said residents began calling into Public Works as soon as service stopped on Thursday.

"We had to bring in help from other departments to field calls because the call volume was extremely high," he said.

"It's a difficult time, because a lot of people are receiving gifts for the holiday, so there's an extreme amount of boxes and cardboard materials — it can pile up quickly."

Talks between Huntington Beach and Republic Services were held twice a day throughout the strike, until the company alerted the city on Thursday afternoon that a tentative agreement had been reached.

In an announcement Thursday following the vote to ratify the new contracts, Republic Services media team said the company takes pride in offering employees competitive wages and comprehensive benefits.

"We look forward to re-

suming regular service in our communities as soon as tomorrow, and we are grateful to our municipal partners for their patience during this work stoppage," the statement read, thanking the city of Anaheim for helping encourage a resolution.

Omar Ortiz, a Republic Services Huntington Beach driver, said in a release issued by Teamsters 396 Friday by standing together, sanitation workers had won respect on the job and a commitment from the company to stop engaging in unfair labor practices.

"I am happy that we are finally being recognized for essential work that ensured that communities were safe during the COVID-19 pandemic," Ortiz said in the release.

Alvarez said he believed the adoption of contingency plans in Huntington Beach and Anaheim, for which Republic Services assumed financial responsibility, and a strong response from the community played a role in ending the stalemate.

"That was definitely a factor, and the support we got from the community was great," he said. "Our members are satisfied and happy to get back to work servicing the communities they work in."

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

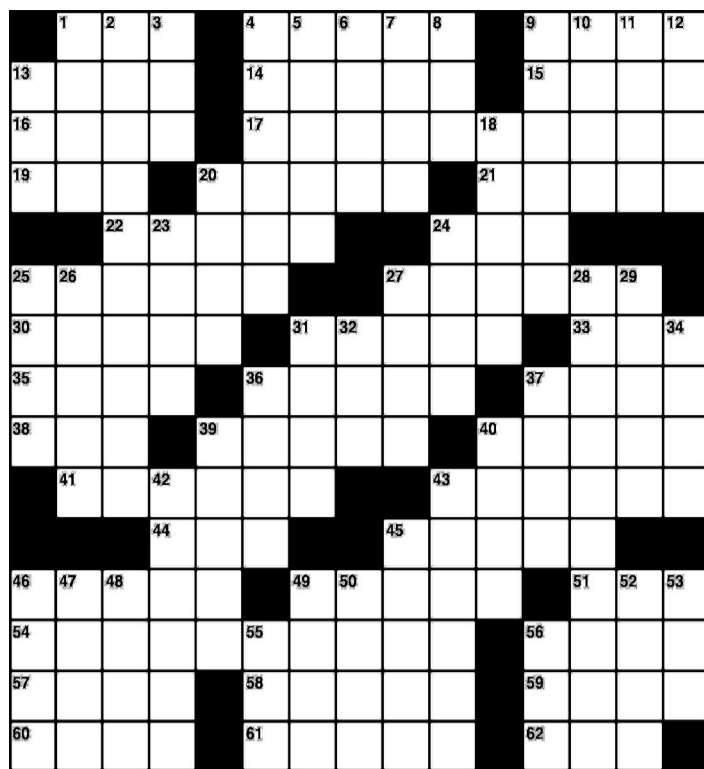
By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 FedEx competitor
- 4 Take _ off; sit down
- 9 Canyon bounceback
- 13 E-J connection
- 14 Gen. _ Powell
- 15 Part of the leg
- 16 Woes
- 17 Hyper
- 19 Pastrami on _; lunch order
- 20 Long lock of hair
- 21 Shoe fasteners
- 22 Tasteless
- 24 Sense of humor
- 25 Freshens a litter box
- 27 Café patrons
- 30 Couric or Holmes
- 31 Sidewalk artist's supply
- 33 Chew and swallow
- 35 Remove wrinkles
- 36 "We _ Overcome"
- 37 In a funk
- 38 "Poltergeist" production co.
- 39 Black card
- 40 UN's goal
- 41 Seafood in a shell
- 43 Dirty tricks
- 44 "_ do you do?"
- 45 Island nation
- 46 Neighbor of Pakistan
- 49 Wading bird
- 51 Gift for a child
- 54 Going in again
- 56 Three squared
- 57 _ smoothie; healthy shake
- 58 Actress Vergara
- 59 Leave suddenly
- 60 _ up; incite
- 61 Piece of asparagus
- 62 Not _ more; no longer

DOWN

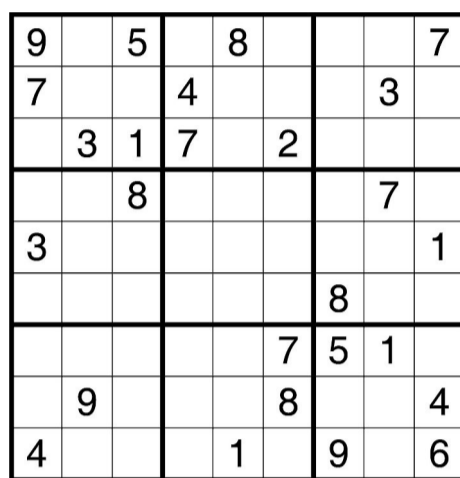
- 1 Unsilently
- 2 Blood-drawing



SUDOKU

By The Mepham 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.

- need
- 23 _ of pork; holiday entrée
- 24 Rogers or Smith
- 25 _ milk; nonfat beverage
- 26 Freight
- 27 Valley
- 28 Cure for stress
- 29 Pizza topper
- 31 Word attached to broil or coal
- 32 9th word in "Humpty Dumpty"
- 34 Souvenir shirts
- 36 Gush forth
- 37 Mixer speed
- 39 Brown ermine
- 40 Krak—w native
- 42 Black eye
- 43 Airplane shelter
- 45 Extreme enthusiasm
- 46 Annoys
- 47 Orderly
- 48 Supermarket section
- 49 Farmer's concern
- 50 Abundant
- 52 "God _ Knows"; Beach Boys hit
- 53 However
- 55 Pothook's shape
- 56 Org. for Kings & Warriors

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CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH PUBLIC NOTICE ORDINANCE SUMMARY

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on December 14, 2021, the City Council of the City of Newport Beach, California, adopted an Ordinance entitled:

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-26

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING TITLE 21 (LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN) OF THE NEWPORT BEACH MUNICIPAL CODE AND ADOPTING LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM AMENDMENT NO. LC2019-001 CORRECTING AND CLARIFYING PROVISIONS RELATED TO MINIMUM LOT SIZE AND DIMENSION, OVERLAYS AND PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE REQUIREMENTS (PA2019-055)

The Ordinance, among other things, formally adopts LCP Amendment No. LC2019-001, revising Title 21, consistent with the October 13, 2021 California Coastal Commission approval to provide code clarification and corrections, and to resolve inconsistencies between Title 20 (Zoning Code) and Title 21. The amendments relate to minimum lot size and dimensions, overlay zoning districts, and public hearing notification requirements.

This Ordinance was adopted by the City Council of the City of Newport Beach, California, at a regular meeting thereof on the 14th day of December, 2021, by the following vote:

- AYES: Mayor Brad Avery, Mayor Pro Tem Kevin Muldoon, Council Member Noah Blom, Council Member Joy Brenner, Council Member Diane Dixon, Council Member Duffy Duffield, Council Member Will O'Neill
NAYS: None

The Ordinance shall become final and effective thirty (30) days after adoption.

Dated this 15th day of December, 2021.

/s/ Leilani I. Brown, City Clerk
City of Newport Beach

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CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH PUBLIC NOTICE ORDINANCE SUMMARY

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on December 14, 2021, the City Council of the City of Newport Beach, California, adopted an Ordinance entitled:

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-28

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING CHAPTER 5.95 (SHORT TERM LODGING PERMIT) AND TITLE 21 (LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN) OF THE NEWPORT BEACH MUNICIPAL CODE RELATING TO SHORT TERM LODGING, AND ADOPTING LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM AMENDMENT NO. LC2020-007 RELATED TO SHORT TERM LODGING AND LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM AMENDMENT NO. LC2020-008 RELATED TO SHORT TERM LODGING ON NEWPORT ISLAND (PA2020-048 AND PA2020-326)

The Ordinance, among other things, updates the regulations for short-term lodging applicable to properties citywide to establish a maximum cap of 1,550 permits and a minimum night stay of two consecutive nights; and establishes additional short-term lodging regulations applicable to Newport Island that include establishing a maximum of 20 permits, requiring properties with short-term lodging to be owner occupied and owner managed, establishing maximum daytime and overnight occupancy limits, restricting rentals to a maximum of one per week, and establishing minimum parking requirements.

This Ordinance was adopted by the City Council of the City of Newport Beach, California, at a regular meeting thereof on the 14th day of December, 2021, by the following vote:

- AYES: Mayor Brad Avery, Council Member Noah Blom, Council Member Joy Brenner, Council Member Diane Dixon, Council Member Duffy Duffield, Council Member Will O'Neill
NAYS: Mayor Pro Tem Kevin Muldoon

The Ordinance shall become final and effective thirty (30) days after adoption.

Dated this 15th day of December, 2021.

/s/ Leilani I. Brown, City Clerk
City of Newport Beach

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CITY OF COSTA MESA SUMMARY OF ADOPTED ORDINANCE NO. 2021-20

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on December 7, 2021, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 2021-20.

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-20

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COSTA MESA AMENDING CHAPTER I, ARTICLE 2: DEFINITIONS; CHAPTER III, PLANNING APPLICATIONS; CHAPTER IV, LAND USE MATRIX; CHAPTER V, RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS; CHAPTER V, COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS; CHAPTER V, PLANNED DEVELOPMENT - MASTER PLAN; CHAPTER VI, OFF-SITE PARKING STANDARDS; CHAPTER VII, LANDSCAPE STANDARDS; CHAPTER VIII, SIGN STANDARDS; AND CHAPTER IX WIRELESS ANTENNAS, OF TITLE 13, PLANNING, ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT (THE ZONING CODE) TO RESOLVE INTERNAL INCONSISTENCIES BETWEEN VARIOUS CHAPTERS, CLARIFY INTENT AND TO CONFORM TO RECENT REVISIONS TO AND REQUIREMENTS OF STATE LAW (CODE AMENDMENT CO-2020-02)

I, BRENDA GREEN, City Clerk of the City of Costa Mesa, DO HEREBY CERTIFY that the above and foregoing Ordinance No. 2021-20 was duly passed and adopted at a regular meeting of the City Council held on December 7, 2021, by the following roll call vote, to wit:

- AYES: COUNCILMEMBERS: CHAVEZ, GAMEROS, HARLAN, HARPER, REYNOLDS, MARR, STEPHENS
NOES: COUNCILMEMBERS: NONE
ABSENT: COUNCILMEMBERS: NONE
ABSTAIN: COUNCILMEMBERS: NONE

I hereby certify that the summary of the adopted ordinance was published in the Daily Pilot on Saturday, December 18, 2021.
Brenda Green, City Clerk, City of Costa Mesa

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POWER

Continued from page A1

Huntington Beach, Irvine, Fullerton and Buena Park to create a user base of about 825,000, according to chief executive Brian Probolsky.

Probolsky said the combined population of the unincorporated areas is about 120,000 to 130,000.

"We're excited to welcome the County of Orange to OCPA membership," Probolsky said.

"It brings community choice to businesses and residents of the unincorporated areas of Orange County, and it makes renewable energy more accessible to everyone by giving customers choice of power for their business or their homes. We're helping local communities take an active role in addressing climate change and ensuring a resilient future."

Orange County 3rd District Supervisor Donald Wagner will represent the county on the OCPA Board of Directors, joining a board that includes Huntington Beach Mayor Pro Tem Mike Posey.

"Serving as your Orange County supervisor, I support renewable energy development, conservation programs and efforts to decrease greenhouse gas emissions," Wagner said in a statement.

"We owe it to our children and grandchildren to leave the world in better shape."

The OCPA still plans to launch service for municipal, commercial and industrial accounts in April, Probolsky said, while residential service is scheduled to launch in October 2022.

He said there are about 10 additional cities that the OCPA has had formal or informal discussions with about joining.

But the public utility program is moving forward without a key proponent.

Antonia Castro-Graham, the chief operating officer, resigned on Dec. 3 after a reported conflict with Probolsky during a board meeting on Nov. 9.

Castro-Graham, a former assistant to the city manager of Huntington Beach who holds a master's degree in sustainability leadership, has been a longtime community choice energy advocate.

Castro-Graham, who was unavailable for comment Thursday, said in her resignation letter to the board of directors that the OCPA "has very much been my baby."

"When I was offered this position, I was overjoyed as it was my dream job," she wrote.

"Sadly, I can no longer work at a place where I am not respected, thus I have chosen to seek employment elsewhere."

Probolsky declined comment on Castro-Graham leaving, other than saying, "We really wish Ms. Graham well on her future endeavors. As a start-up organization, we're taking on a large endeavor here, right?" he said.

"OCPA is supported by an expert team of consultants, who have helped launch all of the other [Community Choice Aggregation programs] in California. We have a very strong team in place to move OCPA forward."

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CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH PUBLIC NOTICE ORDINANCE SUMMARY

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on December 14, 2021, the City Council of the City of Newport Beach, California, adopted an Ordinance entitled:

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-27

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH, CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING ZONING CODE AMENDMENT NO. CA2020-002 TO AMEND TITLE 20 (PLANNING AND ZONING) OF THE NEWPORT BEACH MUNICIPAL CODE RELATED TO TATTOO ESTABLISHMENT DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS (PA2020-030)

The Ordinance, among other things, updates development standards related to tattoo establishments to ensure the Newport Beach Municipal Code is consistent with both state and case law as it pertains to tattoo establishments. The changes will be forwarded to the California Coastal Commission for its consideration.

This Ordinance was adopted by the City Council of the City of Newport Beach, California, at a regular meeting thereof on the 14th day of December, 2021, by the following vote:

- AYES: Mayor Brad Avery, Mayor Pro Tem Kevin Muldoon, Council Member Noah Blom, Council Member Joy Brenner, Council Member Diane Dixon, Council Member Duffy Duffield, Council Member Will O'Neill
NAYS: None

The Ordinance shall become final and effective thirty (30) days after adoption.

Dated this 15th day of December, 2021.

/s/ Leilani I. Brown, City Clerk
City of Newport Beach

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NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF: GUITAR HOANG CASE NO. 30-2021-01224711

To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the WILL or estate, or both of **GUITAR HOANG, PHERO GUITAR HOANG, GUITAR PETER HOANG** A PETITION FOR PROBATE has been filed by **CASEY VO** in the Superior Court of California, County of ORANGE.

THE PETITION FOR PROBATE requests that **CASEY VO** be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent.

THE PETITION requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court should not grant the authority.

A HEARING on the petition will be held in this court as follows: 02/03/2022 at 2:00PM in Dept. C08 located at CENTRAL JUSTICE CENTER, 700 CIVIC CENTER DRIVE WEST, SANTA ANA, CA 92701

Notice in Probate Cases (1) If you plan to appear, you must attend the hearing by video remote using the court's designated video platform; (2) Go to the Court's website at <http://www.occourts.org/media-relations/probate-mental-health.html> to appear for probate hearings and for remote hearing instructions; (3) If you have difficulty connecting to your remote hearing, call 657-622-8278 for assistance.

IF YOU OBJECT to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney.

IF YOU ARE A CREDITOR or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58(b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under section 9052 of the California Probate Code.

Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law.

YOU MAY EXAMINE the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice (form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk.

Petitioner
CASEY VO
2109 VALLEY ROAD,
COSTA MESA, CA 92627
12/11, 12/18, 12/25/21
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COMPANY INFO

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS

U	P	S	A	L	O	A	D	E	C	H	O		
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AROUND TOWN

'Skate with HBPD' event set for Wednesday

Huntington Beach Police Department officers and other representatives will be present Wednesday for a "Skate with HBPD" event at the city's Winter Wonderland at Pier Plaza.

HBPD officers will attend the ice skating rink between 4 and 5:30 p.m. Wednesday.

For more information about the Winter Wonderland rink, including hours of operation, parking details and more, visit huntingtonbeachca.gov/winterwonderland.



Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

VISITORS SKATE around during a soft opening for the Surf City Winter Wonderland ice skating rink on Huntington Beach Pier Plaza. On Wednesday, Huntington Beach Police Department personnel will take spins around the rink with the public between 4 and 5:30 p.m.

Selected sculptures are expected to be on loan to the city for two years, and sculptors whose artwork will be installed will receive a small honorarium. The city is responsible for installing the art while artists are responsible for maintenance and repair of the work. For more information, visit newportbeachca.gov/culturalarts.

Santa on the Promenade

Santa will return to the Promenade on Forest in Laguna Beach on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Santa will be all ears as children tell him what they would like for Christmas. He will be located on an outdoor deck near the intersection of Forest Avenue and Glenneyre Street.

Blood drive at UCI Blood Donor Center, which is in 'dire need'

The UCI Blood Donor Center began hosting Friday a series of blood drives that will continue this Monday through Wednesday, from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day at UCI Medical Center, 101 The City

Drive South in Orange. Officials say the center is in "dire need" of blood, especially type O. All donors will receive their choice of either a \$15 Target or In-N-Out Burger gift card. Appointments are required. Call (714) 456-5433 to reserve a spot.

UCI Health is Orange County's only Level 1 trauma center, providing critical care services not available in any other health system.

Laguna Beach author to hold book-signing event Saturday

Laguna Beach author Laura Ford will be holding a book signing at Lido Village Bookstore in Newport Beach on Saturday from noon to 3 p.m.

Ford released her first young adult novel, "Sounds Like Love," this fall. Copies of the book will be available for purchase at the signing.

'Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over' campaign in high gear

The Fountain Valley Police Department will have additional officers on patrol through New Year's Day looking for drivers suspected of operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol or

drugs. The increased enforcement is part of the "Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over" campaign. If alcohol or drugs are consumed, authorities encourage the use of a designated driver.

"When it comes to consuming drugs and/or alcohol and driving, there is a right and wrong choice," Fountain Valley police Sgt. Brian Mosher said. "Make the right choice by not driving impaired, so everyone is able to enjoy the holidays."

Apply to serve on Laguna Beach boards and committees

The Laguna Beach City Council is currently taking applications to serve on various boards and committees. There are positions open on the design review board, the parking, traffic and circulation committee, the recreation committee, the heritage committee, the environmental sustainability committee, and the view restoration committee.

All applicants will be interviewed by the City Council virtually on Feb. 8 at 5 p.m.

Those interested in applying can pick up an application from the city clerk's office or by visiting lagunabeachcity.net. Applications must be filed by 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 21.

— From staff reports

Public asked to weigh in on Newport Beach park sculptures

The Newport Beach City Arts Commission is seeking public input on the final selection of sculptures to be included in Phase VII of the rotating sculpture exhibition in Newport Beach Civic Center Park. The public survey will be online until Jan. 10 at sparkoc.com/nb_sculpture_poll.

Votes will determine a total of 10 sculptures that will be tentatively installed for the sculpture exhibition. These selections will be presented to the City Council on Jan. 11.



Don Leach | Staff Photographer

TERRY WELSH, president of Banning Ranch Conservancy, speaks as, from left, Costa Mesa council member Arlis Reynolds, Guillermo Rodriguez, State Director for the Trust for Public Land, Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie-Norris, and O.C. Supervisor Katrina Foley join him.

BANNING

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port Beach philanthropists Frank and Joann Randall.

An additional \$6 million came from a Urban Flood Protection grant from California Natural Resources Agency and \$8 million from the California Fish and Wildlife Department. Another \$11 million came from a grant from the federal Fish and Wildlife Department.

Two remaining grants are expected to be considered in 2022 and more information on whether or not they get the grants should be coming in spring, said Banning Ranch Conservancy executive director Melanie Schlotterbeck.

Efforts to preserve the land date back decades, according to the Banning Ranch Conservancy. Organizers say Banning Ranch is the largest parcel of unincorporated, privately owned open space along Southern California's coastline and is home to a number of rare bird species and the endangered San Diego fairy shrimp.

The property, located at the mouth of the Santa Ana River, has mostly escaped the surrounding development in neighboring Newport Beach, Santa Ana and Costa Mesa, in part because of its status as a working oil field since the 1940s.

"We are thrilled and it is because of the partnerships that the Banning Ranch Conservancy has

with the Trust for Public Land, local agencies and our elected leaders that we are this close right now," Schlotterbeck said on a call Friday.

"It's been one of those David and Goliath efforts from the get-go. It really is only because of that \$50-million commitment from Frank and Joann Randall that we are even remotely close to being done with the acquisition price," Schlotterbeck said.

"It's a complicated site, but ... I'm sure once people have access to it, they'll be overjoyed with the wonderful views, the great habitats, the anticipated trails and other opportunities that the site will provide."

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OMICRON

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the world," said Dr. Matthew Zahn, deputy county health officer and medical director in Communicable Disease Control in a statement.

"We had anticipated that Omicron would arrive here in Orange County," Zahn said. "It's important that we all do our part by following public health guidance to protect our loved ones and neighbors, especially those who are most vulnerable, during the holiday season." Earlier this week, state officials implemented an indoor mask mandate for all individuals regardless of vaccination status ahead of what it feared would be a winter surge in cases.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's COVID Data Tracker, Orange County is identified as having "substantial" transmission of the coronavirus on a four-tier scale that ranges from "low" to "high," with California as a

whole rated as the latter.

State officials said Monday the seven-day average case rate has increased by about 47% and hospitalizations by 14% since Thanksgiving weekend. On Friday, Orange County health officials reported 449 new cases and five deaths, including one transient and four individuals not currently living in a facility.

Area hospitals reported Friday that 198 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized and 56 of those are in intensive care units.

Here are the latest cumulative coronavirus case counts and COVID-19 deaths for select cities in Orange County, as of Friday afternoon:

- Santa Ana: 50,677 cases; 952 deaths
- Anaheim: 49,726 cases; 1,035 deaths
- Huntington Beach: 15,073 cases; 262 deaths
- Costa Mesa: 11,497 cases; 162 deaths
- Irvine: 15,135 cases; 118 deaths
- Newport Beach: 5,446 cases; 106 deaths

- Fountain Valley: 4,661 cases; 101 deaths
- Laguna Beach: 1,289 cases; 10 deaths

Here are the case counts by age group, followed by deaths:

- 0 to 17: 38,133 cases; two deaths
- 18 to 24: 42,680 cases; 10 deaths
- 25 to 34: 63,216 cases; 75 deaths
- 35 to 44: 49,513 cases; 160 deaths
- 45 to 54: 49,589 cases; 401 deaths
- 55 to 64: 39,477 cases; 876 deaths
- 65 to 74: 19,772 cases; 1,141 deaths
- 75 to 84: 9,939 cases; 1,407 deaths
- 85 and older: 6,303 cases; 1,779 deaths

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