

# Daily Pilot

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2021 /// Now including Coastline Pilot and Huntington Beach Independent /// dailypilot.com

## Newport budget shows \$31M surplus

Much of that revenue will be earmarked for capital improvement projects that have not yet been identified.

BY LILLY NGUYEN

The Newport Beach City Council on Tuesday learned the city has a surplus of \$31 million in its budget, exceeding initial projections set for the end of the last fiscal year.

A staff report prepared for the council's regular meeting said most revenue categories performed at or higher than expected levels projected in the budget adopted in April 2020. Primary city revenues come largely from the city's property taxes, sales tax and transient occupancy tax, also known as the hotel tax, with property taxes typically representing just under 50% of the city's general funds.

Chief finance officer Scott Catlett said property taxes came in at about \$2 million above budget and sales tax had a "record" year, coming in at \$454,000 higher than in 2018-19 and was about \$4.4 million above budget. The transient occupancy tax was the most significantly impacted, but Catlett said the city was in a better position than originally assumed during budget revision.

"Bottom line for the general fund results, we ended with a \$31-million surplus, but it's important to put that number in context. Of that number, \$24 million ... was prior year surpluses from the prior two years that we carried forward to weather the pandemic," Catlett said. "\$7 million is current year revenues and the budget for the new year we're in now is fully balanced, which

See *Surplus*, page A2



Photos by Kevin Chang | Staff Photographer

**COSTA MESA'S** Ayden Alcazar celebrates after scoring a penalty goal against Estancia during the first half in the Battle for the Bell match on Wednesday.

## Mustangs boys' water polo owns city, league crown

BY MATT SZABO

The Costa Mesa High boys' water polo team opened its season with one-goal losses to Woodbridge and Marina.

It did not get easier from there, at least not right away.

The losing streak ballooned to eight matches, and maybe growing pains could be expected. In the eight years that Cody and Dustin Serrano have been coaching at their alma mater, this year's team was the least experienced.

There are four freshmen starters — Ayden Alcazar, Luke De La Jara, Nathan Ruiz and Dylan Rothenberg — and sophomore goalkeeper Omar Babovic was just getting his varsity legs.

But then a funny thing happened. The

See *Mustangs*, page A4



**ESTANCIA'S MICAH GNIFFKE**, top, competes against Costa Mesa during the first half of Wednesday's match.

## Suspect in attempted murder in Costa Mesa being held without bail

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Costa Mesa police on Wednesday arrested a Norwalk man wanted on suspicion of attempted murder, ending a months-long search that began in March this year.

Max Diamond, 29, was located by detectives traveling to a gas station in the 2600 block of La Palma. He was arrested without incident. According to jail records, Diamond is in custody and being held without bail.

He is expected to appear in

See *Suspect*, page A2



Max Diamond

## UCI brings 'Squid Game' to campus

BY LILLY NGUYEN



Angeline Hernandez | UC Irvine

**UC IRVINE STUDENTS** play a game of ddakji, a traditional South Korean game played using folded paper tiles.

This is just a game, but a less fatal one than some viewers of Netflix's "Squid Game" might expect.

The grounds of UC Irvine's Humanities Gateway building Tuesday became a gathering place for students, faculty and staff, desperate and vying — not for billions in Korean won, but for a pack of Samyang ramen. Students were spread across the green, playing marbles or *ddakji*, a South Korean game played using folded paper tiles featured at the start of "Squid Game."

The show, which premiered on Netflix in September, is reportedly the streaming service's most watched series to date, is a sur-

See *Squid*, page A2

## Exer Urgent Care opens first O.C. facility in Huntington Beach

BY MATT SZABO

Huntington Beach Mayor Kim Carr attended a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Exer Urgent Care's first Orange County location on Wednesday morning.

Carr certainly hopes she doesn't have to be back any time soon, but anything is possible with teenage children at home.

"As we know, kids don't get hurt Monday through Friday, 8 [a.m.] to 5 [p.m.]," Carr said. "As a mom of two teenagers, I can tell you the worst accidents always happen in the evening or on the weekends. To have something like this, that is quick but has emergency doctors on location, that's going to be huge for our community to have affordable care that's easily accessible. I'm grateful that they picked Huntington to be their first lo-

cation in Orange County."

The Huntington Beach location opened at 7211 Warner Ave., across the street from Ocean View High School. It is the 24th clinic location for Exer, which has been in business since 2012.

Exer Chief Executive Rob Mahan, originally from San Clemente, said the company plans to open several more locations in the county over the coming months. The first is expected to be in Irvine in December, and a Costa Mesa location is slated to follow, likely in early 2022.

What sets Exer apart is quick, affordable care with emergency room-trained doctors on site, Mahan said. The center offers an on-site pharmacy, an in-house PCR lab featuring next-day COVID-19 testing results

See *Urgent*, page A2



**CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER**

Dr. Cory Spurlock at Exer Urgent Care's first Orange County location on Wednesday morning in Huntington Beach.

Kevin Chang  
Staff  
Photographer

BRIEFLY IN THE NEWS

L.A. man dies in single-car crash on 405 Freeway in C.M.

A 23-year-old Los Angeles man sustained fatal injuries in a crash on the San Diego (405) Freeway in Costa Mesa, police said Wednesday.

The driver, whose name was not immediately released, was driving north in his 1992 Volvo at about 11:45 p.m. Tuesday when the car drifted to the right, left the roadway and slammed into a temporary concrete barrier, according to the California Highway Patrol.

The man was rushed to Orange County Global Medical Center in Santa Ana, where he was pronounced dead at 12:31 a.m.

SURPLUS

Continued from page A1

essentially means this is all now one-time money. That's a great place to be in.

"This is an accumulation of three years of our year-end surpluses and kind of a unique situation for our city because of COVID," Catlett said.

Councilman Will O'Neill agreed it won't happen again because of a change in surplus spending.

The results of the financial report are still considered preliminary in nature and are subject to adjustments through December while city financial records

are being routinely audited, according to city staff.

Those adjustments are not expected to significantly impact what was presented to the City Council this week.

The council members voted unanimously to allocate the surplus funds in accordance with city staff's recommendation, placing \$5 million to bring the city's CalPERS unfunded liability contribution to \$40 million. About \$10.5 million will be put toward long-term infrastructure liabilities in the city's facilities financial plan and harbor and beaches capital improvement plan.

Additionally, \$15.5 mil-

lion will go to the capital improvement program to include neighborhood enhancement projects for the upcoming budget. About \$10.1 million from the American Rescue Plan Act funds will also be put toward the capital improvement program for that same budget planning process.

City Manager Grace Leung said the capital improvement projects are not currently specified, but that city staff does intend to return to discuss what those projects are with community and council input.

lilly.nguyen@latimes.com Twitter: @lillibirds

URGENT

Continued from page A1

and X-ray services.

Mahan added that the urgent care facility can see approximately 80% of the patients typically seen in an emergency room.

"If somebody is coming in experiencing chest pain, we actually have a lab test that will confirm whether or not they're having a heart attack," he said. "That's amazing, because the majority of people who come in with chest pain are ultimately having indigestion or experiencing anxiety. You go to the ER, that's a \$25,000 visit. You come to Exer, that's something that's a fraction of that price."

The Huntington Beach location, a converted bank, will be open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week. It accepts most PPO insurance and some HMO and Medicare, as well as payment options for those with minimal or no health insurance.

Dr. Cory Spurlock, Exer Urgent Care chief medical officer, showed a tour of the Surf City facility after Wednesday's ribbon-cutting ceremony. It includes a clinical area in the front, infusion rooms and several exam rooms. There's also a kids' room.

"There will be a TV and typically a kid-friendly movie looping," he said. "Pre-pandemic, we had some toys and books. Now we're keeping it a little bit more sterile."

Spurlock, who has been with Exer for four years, said he's happy about opening the first Orange County location, with more to come.

"It's a good spot, with a high school across the street, a lot of commerce around, a high-traffic area," Spurlock said. "It should do well for the community."

Mahan, who now lives in Manhattan Beach, also is pleased with Exer's first foray into Orange County.

"I think it's very fitting that Huntington Beach is the first," he said. "Since I left Orange County, this is probably the area I've surfed the most."

matthews.zsabo@latimes.com Twitter: @mjszabo

SQUID

Continued from page A1

vival drama in which 456 players in dire financial straits put their lives on the line and are in competition to win the 45.6 billion won prize by playing children's games.

The event Tuesday drew on the show's popularity, according to Jerry Won Lee, the event organizer and director of UCI's Program in Global Languages and Communication.

Around 300 to 400 people are estimated to have stopped by to play a few of the games and attend a talk on the show provided by Kyung Hyun Kim, a UCI professor of east Asian languages and literature.

"I don't really follow pop culture very much and I'm just generally not interested in it at all," Lee said. "What I noticed was—even before I saw the show and I didn't have any plans to see the show—that a lot of people were talking about the issues with the translations and the subtitles.

"Part of it is that some things cannot be translated from Korean into English. But other things...a lot of commentary about the bad subtitles and translations, so that's when I became interested in the show and that's what inspired me to watch it," Lee said.

"I'm a professor of applied linguistics, so I'm very interested in every day, real world implications of language," he said. "What I was noticing was there was this event or this show that was

generating a lot of interest in language and it was getting everyday people interested in language and talking about language."

Lee said that, along with what he feels is growing interest in Korean language and culture, there was the added benefit of Kim as a resource. The event came together a bit at the last minute with details finalized only a few weeks ago.

Lee went around with a couple of volunteers dressed as the man in the gray suit that invites show protagonist Seong Gi-hun to play a game of *ddakji* for money and eventually to play for higher stakes.

Lee and his volunteers handed out small business cards printed with three iconic shapes the Netflix show features on masks worn by characters and a url linking to the event, though Lee said some students were hesitant or scared.

He proudly admitted he beat every person he challenged at the game.

Lee said he hoped the event would bring the campus together through the games and a shared cultural interest because of how isolating the pandemic has been.

Organizers were dressed in hot pink shirts and offered supplies and directions on how to play Tuesday. They also held a prize drawing for small, clear piggy banks—again, reflecting a clear piggy bank on the show—filled with candies.

"One of the must asked questions it seems from ev-

ery journalist is 'Why do you think this is so popular?' I have five-minute answers and a minute answer, but I like to think about ... how South Korea's always been a pretty important cultural ally to America and it's been a pretty close partner for the last 75 years," Kim said.

"For the purpose here, I'd like to point out that it really does get us back to childhood memories. The games are very germane and very specific to the local Korean games that we used to play."

Kim said that he immigrated from South Korea when he was about 10 and said he is close in age to show creator Hwang Dong-hyuk.

"Even though you may not be very aware of some of the specifics of the games, these being so simplistic and pastoral ... most people around the world would be able to relate to it very closely," Kim said. "It has a way of reminding us that, 'OK.' The reasons we played these games 20 years ago, 30 years ago ... is not necessarily because you would produce winners and losers.

"A lot of times, that's not the point of the game, but it's just to have fun. A lot of times, we lose track of that and that's part of the reason why I think these memories and games are important. That's the pleasure of maybe looking at 'Squid Game' and realizing, 'Hey, wait a minute. Maybe we lost something in the process.'"

lilly.nguyen@latimes.com Twitter: @lillibirds

SUSPECT

Continued from page A1

court on Friday for an arraignment in custody in Santa Ana.

Diamond faces felony charges for attempted murder with a sentencing enhancement for discharging a firearm that caused great bodily injury or resulted in death for the March incident, wherein he is alleged to have fired on a 30-year-old man in the 2000 block of Harbor

Boulevard.

Police said in March they responded to calls at around 5:40 a.m. on March 2 and found the victim with a gunshot wound to the neck. The victim was transported to a hospital for treatment of his injury and survived.

Officers said the incident occurred when the victim heard a disturbance between a man and a woman. When the woman screamed, the victim went to a parking lot to investigate.

He later witnessed the woman running from the man, which police identify as Diamond, a parolee. The victim followed. The woman ran south on Harbor Boulevard and Diamond stopped to confront the victim.

Diamond is alleged to have then have pulled a gun from his waistband and shot at the victim before fleeing on foot north on Harbor.

lilly.nguyen@latimes.com Twitter: @lillibirds

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 Peanut butter brand
4 Mature
9 Clark or Cavett
13 Last name for 1950s singing brothers
15 Throat dangler
16 Acting part
17 Blender speed
18 Underground worker
19 Send \_; dismiss
20 Al Hirt or Louis Armstrong
22 Openings
23 Name for 12 popes
24 Needless fuss
26 Zsa Zsa & Eva
29 Plant specialist
34 "That's \_"; Dean Martin song
35 Preserved bacon
36 McClanahan of "The Golden Girls"
37 Talk back
38 Tear to bits
39 \_ John's; pizza franchise
40 \_ Arizona; Pearl Harbor target
41 Taking to court
42 Provide banquet food
43 Mediums
45 Baffling questions
46 Word attached to head or cake
47 Cleans the floor
48 "There \_ farmer had a dog and Bingo"
51 Rising
56 \_ deficiency anemia; blood condition
57 Chin covering
58 Empty space
60 Self-righteous
61 By and \_; on the whole
62 Covetous feeling
63 Excessive publicity
64 Older relative

Grid for the Daily Commuter Puzzle with numbered starting points for across clues.

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.

9x9 grid for the Sudoku puzzle with some numbers pre-filled.

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

- 65 Wide shoe width
DOWN
1 Poke sharply
2 TV's "How \_ Your Mother"
3 Panic
4 \_ room; place

- 11 Sound of thunder
12 Door openers
14 Dazed states
21 Deep mud
25 Family member
26 Fill the tank
27 Stockpile
28 Domineering
29 Firefighting hazards
30 Neighbor of WA state
31 Incensed
32 "Terrific!"
33 In \_; inconsolable
35 Stylish
38 Appropriate
39 Apathetic
41 Premium cable network, for short
42 Pulmonary disease letters
44 Loose coins
45 Think deeply about
47 Highway sign
48 Genie's offering
49 Military force
50 Dinner course
52 TV's "\_ Team"
53 Deuce or troy
54 Nary a one
55 Be generous
59 Easter egg coloring

Tribune Media Services

South Coast Repertory Orange County's Tony Award-winning Theatre

WELCOME BACK TO LIVE THEATRE!

"FASCINATING ... Ivers' performance shines" -Voice of OC

"If a phrase like 'TOUR DE FORCE' is possibly overused ... in this case it's 100% ACCURATE." -Newport Beach Independent

Advertisement for the play 'A Shot Rang Out' featuring David Ivers, directed by Tony Taccone.

Advertisement for the play 'A Christmas Carol' featuring Richard Doyle as Ebenezer Scrooge, adapted by Jerry Patch.

SUBSCRIBERS SAVE 20-30% BUY YOUR SEASON TICKET TODAY!

(714) 708-5555 • SCR.org For SCR's full COVID-19 requirements and protocol: scr.org/covid



