

Newport mom seeks to serve prison term at home

BY HILLARY DAVIS



Michelle Janavs

A Newport Beach woman set to serve her sentence for her role in the college admissions bribery scandal has petitioned to serve her confinement at home in light of the coronavirus pandemic, which has also taken root inside federal prisons.

Michelle Janavs, 49, was sentenced in February to five months in prison for paying \$100,000 to fix her daughters' college entrance exams and agreeing to pay twice that amount to get one girl into USC as a bogus beach volleyball player. She pleaded guilty in October to conspiring to com-

mit fraud and money laundering, admitting she paid scheme mastermind William "Rick" Singer to rig her daughters' college admissions.

But Janavs, known for being an heiress to the Hot Pockets frozen food fortune, had not yet started serving her term — and because she is a nonviolent, first-time offender with an underlying health condition that could make her susceptible to COVID-19,

the disease caused by the coronavirus, she shouldn't report at all, her lawyers argued in a court filing Wednesday.

"In sum, if Ms. Janavs were to surrender to [Bureau of Prisons] custody, she is highly likely to become infected with COVID-19. And because of her underlying health condition, she faces a much higher risk than others of serious complications, hospitalization, or death from the virus," her lawyers wrote. "By contrast, home incarceration in lieu of BOP custody for the same period would impose sufficient punishment without the corresponding risk of dis-

ease and death."

The exact nature of Janavs' health issues was redacted.

The kind of strict physical distancing public health officials and local governments advise to tamp down the virus' spread is not possible in the confines of group settings like prison, and the U.S. attorney general has instructed the Bureau of Prisons to consider transferring vulnerable, nonviolent offenders to home confinement.

"Indeed, if Ms. Janavs were in custody now, it is likely that she would be processed for release to home confinement," her

lawyers wrote.

As of Wednesday, no cases of COVID-19 were reported at FPC Bryan, the minimum-security Texas prison camp where she's supposed to serve, according to online records. More than 560 inmates and 340 Bureau of Prisons staff nationwide have tested positive for the virus, the agency says. Twenty four inmates have died.

Janavs' attorney reached out last month to the warden where Janavs is set to begin her bid in May to seek conversion of her sentence to home confinement, according to court documents. A lawyer for the prison system said it

would not move for a modification because Janavs was not yet in custody, although it would not object to delaying her surrender date by 60 days.

Her lawyers, however, say that would not solve the problem, as health experts predict a second wave of the virus in the winter.

"She accepts the five-month sentence the court imposed and wishes to begin serving it now, but the conditions within the BOP make it unsafe to do so," they said.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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F.V. council OKs help for small businesses and first responders

BY BEN BRAZIL

The Fountain Valley City Council on Tuesday unanimously confirmed a grant program to help small businesses with low- and moderate-income workers and an ordinance that allows first responders to use recreational vehicles as alternative housing to keep their families safe from COVID-19.

The council voted to allocate grant money to small businesses because many were forced to close or reduce services after Gov. Gavin Newsom's stay-at-home order last month.

The council's vote was confirmation of a grant that Fountain Valley City Manager Rob Houston approved on April 13. The City Council granted Houston "emergency powers" on March 17 to rapidly respond to emergencies during the pandemic. However, the council still needs to confirm his actions "at the earliest practicable time."

The Small Business Employee Retention Grant will pay up to \$10,000 a month, or up to 75% of payroll costs, for up to two months to businesses with 10 employees or less. However, businesses must pledge to keep low- and moderate-income workers on staff for at least two months. Businesses must also be operating during the crisis and show 25% revenue loss.

Orange County workers are considered low- and moderate-income if they make less than \$66,500 a year, according to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

There are about 25 applicants tentatively approved for the grant. The average amount that will be granted to each business is about \$11,400.

The council voted to temporarily lift prohibitions against living in recreational vehicles and the length of time that RVs can be parked on city streets. The decision was made to support first responders who may use RVs as alternative housing in order to not expose their families to COVID-19 or contaminate their homes.

The council's vote was confirmation of an ordinance that Houston approved on April 9.

A local organization, RVs for COVID, is donating vehicles to first responders to use during the crisis.

Emergency RV permits still have to be obtained through approval by the Police Department. The ordinance will expire when the city's local emergency declaration or Newsom's order ends.

Both items were approved with little council discussion.

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Laguna Beach mayor asks Board of Supervisors to close county beaches

BY LILLY NGUYEN

Ahead of what is described as "unseasonably warm weather" due at the end of the week, Laguna Beach Mayor Bob Whalen asked the Orange County Board of Supervisors to approve the closure of county beaches and trailheads in south Orange County.

Forecasts by the National Weather Service predict temperatures will begin to climb from 71 on Wednesday to a high of 79 on Friday and 78 on Saturday in Laguna Beach.

In a letter to Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, who oversees the 5th District which includes several south county cities, dated for April 20, Whalen asked the Board of



Don Leach / Staff Photographer

FAMILY AND friends gather on a mostly deserted Main Beach in Laguna Beach recently.

See *Beaches*, page A3

Laguna Beach tourism marketing district approved

BY LILLY NGUYEN

The Laguna Beach City Council unanimously approved the formation of a tourism marketing district to replace the previous business improvement district.

The conversion of the district, which includes all lodging businesses within city borders, does not affect the distribution of assessments, but only changes the governance guiding the district, Cultural Arts Manager Sian Poeschl said.

An annual assessment of

2% of gross short-term room rental revenue would fund sales, marketing and communications and programs by the city Arts Commission, Laguna College of Art + Design, Laguna Playhouse and Laguna Art Museum.

The business improvement district was adopted in April 2001 with the intent of using additional taxes on businesses to promote off-season cultural events and encourage hotel occupancy.

Converting to a tourism marketing district allows the district a five-year term

instead of having to renew annually.

The term of the Laguna Beach Tourism Marketing District will begin on July 1 and last through June 2025.

Though the City Council received public input at its March 31 meeting, residents called in on Tuesday night to raise concerns about the clientele that Visit Laguna Beach would appeal to. Callers raised concerns about the potential for increased numbers of "day-trippers" as opposed to overnight stays by visitors.

The city will remain responsible for collecting the assessment on a quarterly basis and distributing the funds. Visit Laguna Beach will be responsible for managing the tourism district's programs and reporting annually to the City Council.

WASTEWATER FINANCING OPTIONS Tabled

The city of Laguna Beach also considered Tuesday alternative financing options to pay for a wastewater sys-

See *Tourism*, page A3

Construction equipment fire results in delays on 405 Freeway in Fountain Valley

BY BEN BRAZIL

Delays were expected throughout the day on the 405 Freeway near Talbert Avenue in Fountain Valley after construction equipment caught fire Wednesday morning, according to the Fountain Valley Fire Department.

Fountain Valley firefighters arrived on the scene after receiving a call at 8:52 a.m. They were assisted by Costa Mesa, Hunt-

ington Beach and Orange County Fire Authority firefighters, the Fountain Valley Fire Department said. Fountain Valley police and the California Highway Patrol helped with traffic flow.

The crews knocked the fire down by 9:14 a.m., confining it to the "object of origin," the department said.

Flames reached nearby power lines and outages were expected until Southern California Edison personnel restored power.

Both directions of the 405 were temporarily shut down. No injuries were reported.

The construction equipment that caught fire was part of the 405 Freeway \$1.9-billion widening project to expand 16 miles of the 405 between the 73 Freeway in Costa Mesa and the 605 Freeway near Rossmoor.

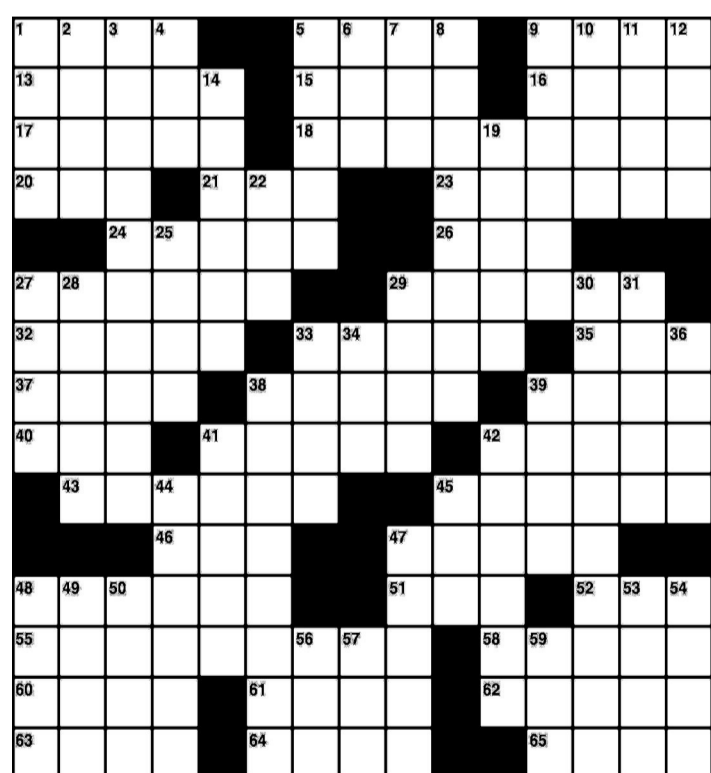
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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

ACROSS

- 1 Texas two-; lively dance
- 5 Croat or Czech
- 9 Farm machine
- 13 Vetoed; put a stop to
- 15 Fictional story
- 16 _ about; sing the praises of
- 17 Fit to be tied
- 18 Left high and dry
- 20 Woman's nickname
- 21 " _ Me Call You Sweetheart"
- 23 One side in baseball negotiations
- 24 Waterbirds
- 26 Citi Field athlete
- 27 Candle shop pleasures
- 29 What each flag stripe represents
- 32 Boldness
- 33 Evil demon
- 35 Where Ménière's disease strikes
- 37 "An apple _ keeps..."
- 38 Daytime serials
- 39 Alphabetical foursome
- 40 Touch lightly
- 41 Roof supports
- 42 Boy Scout group
- 43 Feel bitter about
- 45 Snapshots
- 46 Drivers' org.
- 47 One of the Judds
- 48 Kidnap
- 51 American _; MA's state tree



For answers to the crossword, see page A4.

- 52 Fore and _ locomotive
- 55 Old name for a leisurely
- 58 Largest city in Peru
- 61 Bug spray
- 62 Realtor's delights
- 63 Notices
- 64 Agile
- 65 Shipshape
- 10 _ change; reason to use a blinker
- 11 _ and above; beyond
- 12 Takes for better or for worse
- 14 Remove text
- 19 _ in; inhabit
- 22 Curly letter
- 25 Covetous feeling
- 27 Lose it
- 28 Furniture wood
- 29 Police officers
- 30 Open to debate, as a contract
- 31 Email provider
- 33 Animal with a beard
- 34 Holiday entrée, perhaps
- 36 _ up; tears to bits
- 38 Rubio & Feinstein
- 39 " _ Here to Eternity"
- 41 Landcastle's location
- 42 Famous doubter
- 44 Good places to sweat
- 45 Crony
- 47 Poor
- 48 Feels lousy
- 49 Cheese in a whitish rind
- 50 Taj Mahal's roof
- 53 Pesky insect
- 54 Midterm or final
- 56 Ice Cube's music
- 57 _ Isaac Newton
- 59 Guy

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