

Daily Pilot

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Photos by James Carbone

HUNTINGTON BEACH residents protest and hold signs about the proposal to screen children's books at the Huntington Beach Public Library during Tuesday night's City Council meeting, where members voted 4-3 to create a community review board of up to 21 members.

H.B. council majority opts to vet children's library books

Decision approves resolution to create community panel of up to 21 members to review material for subjects and content deemed objectionable.

BY MATT SZABO

A community parent advisory board will be tasked with approving children's books that hit shelves in the Huntington Beach Public Library, a move critics say is a book ban and takes power away from trained and educated librarians.

The Huntington Beach City Council voted 4-3, with the conservative majority holding sway, to approve a resolution to form the board near the end of a hotly debated meeting Tuesday night.

There were 128 people signed up for public comments, which took about five hours. About 550

people also emailed the City Council about the agenda item, with more than 90% against the idea of a council-appointed board screening children's books for sexual content.

But Resolution No. 2023-41, introduced by Mayor Pro Tem Gracey Van Der Mark, was passed. Van Der Mark was joined in support by her conservative colleagues on the dais, Mayor Tony Strickland and Councilmen Casey McKeon and Pat Burns. Councilman Dan Kalmick and Councilwomen Natalie Moser and Rhonda Bolton voted against

See **Books**, page A3



HUNTINGTON BEACH residents cheer and hold signs during public comments at Tuesday night's Huntington Beach City Council meeting.

Huntington Beach's Dom Jones pivots to the race for State Assembly District 72

HUNTINGTON BEACH resident Dom Jones is running for the State Assembly in District 72 instead of pursuing the District 47 congressional seat.



File Photo

BY MATT SZABO

She was aiming for Washington, D.C., but now she has her sights set on Sacramento.

Dom Jones has pivoted from a crowded Congressional District 47 race into the contest for State Assembly District 72, she said Saturday.

The community activist from Huntington Beach is the only Democrat in the District 72 race and will contest incumbent Diane Dixon, a Republican from Newport Beach.

"I could not have asked for a more perfect outcome," Jones said. "It's absolutely phenomenal how it all turned on its head. I've been in this race for 10 months, and my opponents have been able to out-raise me. But what kept me contending and on every stage

See **Jones**, page A6

Task force winds down, shares ideas

Members last week gave suggestions as Ocean View School District trustees prepare to consider school closures.

BY MATT SZABO

The Ocean View School District Board of Trustees will again weigh difficult decisions on possible school closures after receiving suggestions from a Superintendent's Schools Task Force.

The task force, which has been holding meetings since the spring, held its 11th and final meeting last Thursday night at the district office. Twenty-one task force members in attendance took votes on which ideas they would prefer to recommend to the school board, as it has weighed possibly closing Circle View, Village View and Golden View elementary schools and repurposing Spring View Middle School.

Nineteen suggestions were presented in the areas of innovation, instruction, financial and property management. At a special board meeting on Oct. 5, at least three members agreed that each suggestion was a viable option in the face of the district's continued declining enrollment.

The task force, which consisted of school site, community, union and administration representatives and was facilitated by former Orange County superintendent Joe Farley, agreed on some ideas. Twenty members believed the district should open the farm at Golden View to outside districts, while 16 agreed the district should focus on how to effectively address over-staffing as a cost-saving method. In a related suggestion, 18 were in agreement that Ocean View should entice teachers to retire.

Other suggestions were more basic, with 20 agreeing the district should offer instructional programs and options that other dis-

See **Task**, page A2

ALSO FROM THE DAILY PILOT:



James Carbone

CORONA DEL MAR GIRLS' TENNIS ON TOP IN SURF LEAGUE PAGE A6

OBITUARY

Daily Pilot, Times photographer kept his eye trained on local news

BY SARA CARDINE

Richard Koehler, a former Daily Pilot photographer known for being the first to arrive at a breaking news scene — which earned him the nickname "Scoop" — died Thursday at his Costa Mesa home after a battle with cancer. He was 82.

Friends, family members and colleagues fondly recall a man who carried a camera wherever he went, snapping images of

people, places and scenes, both for placement in area publications or for the sheer pleasure of watching life unfold before a viewfinder.

"My dad was a really quiet person, but he liked being involved — I think that was one of his ways to be involved in the community," daughter Kerrie Conti recalled of her father's photography Tuesday. "He felt more comfortable with his camera."

Born on April 2, 1941, Koehler graduated from Newport Harbor High School, where he served on the school newspaper before graduating in 1959 and moving on to Orange Coast College.

As a young reporter for the Newport Beach News Press, purchased by the Daily Pilot in the 1960s, Koehler had already garnered the nickname "Scoop" by those familiar with his penchant

See **Obituary**, page A4



Courtesy of Kerrie Conti

RICHARD "SCOOP" KOEHLER took photos for area newspapers for seven decades, serving 20 years at the Daily Pilot. He died Thursday at age 82.

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THU, OCT 19
PAT TRAVERS



FRI, OCT 20
ORIANTHI



SAT, OCT 21
PAT BOONE



SUN, OCT 22
MIKE PETERS of The Alarm

10/19 PAT TRAVERS BAND
10/20 ORIANTHI
10/21 PAT BOONE
10/22 MIKE PETERS
PRESENTS THE ALARM ACOUSTIC
10/25 CHRISTOPHER CROSS
10/26 DAVE MASON
10/27 PIANO MEN (*BILLY JOEL AND ELTON JOHN TRIBUTE*)
10/28 ALO
WITH SPECIAL GUEST SHIRA ELIAS
10/29 MARTIN SEXTON
10/31 OINGO BOINGO FORMER MEMBERS
11/1 RIDERS IN THE SKY
(ACOUSTIC WESTERN COWBOY MUSIC AND HUMOR)
11/2 ZEBRA
11/3 LED ZEPAGAIN (*LED ZEPPELIN TRIBUTE*)
11/4 LED ZEPAGAIN (*LED ZEPPELIN TRIBUTE*)
11/5 BEN OTTEWELL / IAN BALL (*OF GOMEZ*)
11/7 CARE FOR THE GIVERS
ALZHEIMER'S BENEFIT CONCERT
11/8 RODNEY CROWELL
11/9 THE YOUNG DUBLINERS
11/10 WHICH ONE'S PINK? "Wish You Were Here"
11/11 WHICH ONE'S PINK? "Dark Side Of The Moon"
11/12 WISHBONE ASH
11/15 LEONID & FRIENDS (*CHICAGO TRIBUTE*)
11/16 LEONID & FRIENDS (*CHICAGO TRIBUTE*)
11/17 FOGHAT
11/18 ABBAFAB (*ABBA TRIBUTE*)
11/19 COCO MONTOYA
11/22 QRST (*QUEEN/RUSH/STYX TRIBUTE*)
11/24 JUMPING JACK FLASH (*STONES TRIBUTE*)
11/25 BUFFETT BEACH (*JIMMY BUFFETT TRIBUTE*)
11/26 ARETHA
STARRING CHARITY LOCKHART



THU, OCT 26
DAVE MASON



SAT, OCT 28
ALO

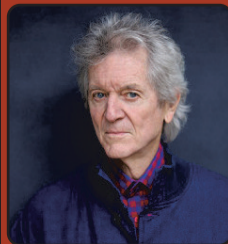


SUN, OCT 29
MARTIN SEXTON



THU, NOV 2
ZEBRA

11/30 THE MUSICAL BOX - *SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND*
12/1 THE MUSICAL BOX - *SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND*
12/2 LEE ROCKER OF THE STRAY CATS
12/8 GENE LOVES JEZEBEL / BOW WOW WOW
12/16 GARY HOEY'S *ROCKIN HOLIDAY SHOW*
12/22 AMBROSIA *A VERY SPECIAL HOLIDAY SHOW*
12/23 FLOCK OF SEAGULLS
12/28 L.A. GUNS
12/29 DONAVON FRANKENREITER / *GOODNIGHT, TEXAS*
12/30 DONAVON FRANKENREITER / *GOODNIGHT, TEXAS*
12/31 LOS LOBOS *NEW YEAR'S EVE!*
1/5 QUEEN NATION (*QUEEN TRIBUTE*)
1/6 QUEEN NATION (*QUEEN TRIBUTE*)
1/7 BOBBY GRAY
1/12 TOMMY CASTRO
1/13 WILD CHILD (*THE DOORS TRIBUTE*)
1/19 MARC COHN
1/20 MARC COHN
1/26 PETTY BREAKERS (*TOM PETTY TRIBUTE*)
2/3 GLENN HUGHES *DEEP PURPLE SET*
- *50TH ANNIVERSARY OF BURN*
2/9 FAST TIMES (*80s CONCERT EXPERIENCE*)
2/10 JOURNEY USA (*JOURNEY TRIBUTE*)
2/14 OTTMAR LIEBERT & LUNA NEGRA
2/17 THE MOTELS
2/22 SHAWN PHILLIPS
2/24 DADA
4/5 ULI JON ROTH
- *INTERSTELLAR SKY GUITAR TOUR*
4/14 THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS
4/19 RICHIE FURAY



WED, NOV 8
RODNEY CROWELL



SUN, NOV 12
WISHBONE ASH



FRI, NOV 17
FOGHAT

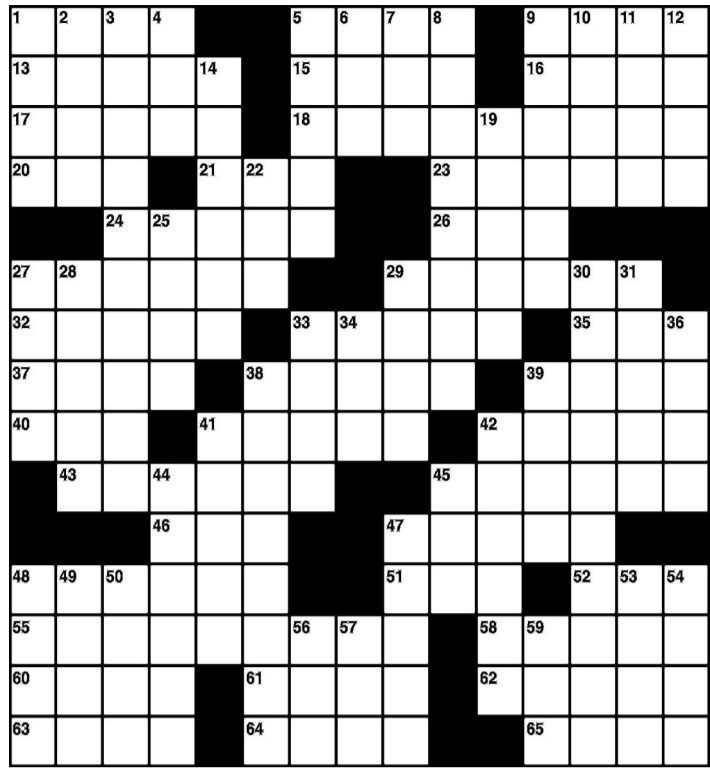


SUN, NOV 19
COCO MONTOYA

THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Jacqueline E. Mathews

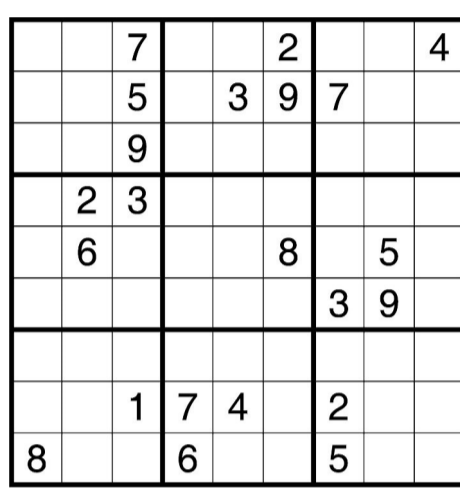
ACROSS
1 _ Lee; frozen dessert brand
5 Drinks slowly
9 Gateway _; St. Louis landmark
13 Prophetic signs
15 Horse's gait
16 Narrative
17 Fragrant flower
18 Decrease; lessening
20 Presidential monogram
21 Motorists' org.
23 Human _; people
24 Reagan or Pelosi
26 Cocktail lounge
27 On the ball
29 JFK's father
32 Cumbersome
33 Coastline
35 "Go, team!"
37 Bruce & Spike
38 Extraterrestrial
39 TV clown
40 O'Neill & Sheeran
41 Civil disturbances
42 Fireproof boxes
43 Accompany
45 Garden pests
46 Massage
47 Monster
48 Word with salad or chips
51 Acorn dropper
52 Long _; in olden times
55 Skin layer
58 Funny bone's spot
60 Jailbird's room
61 Silent assents
62 Beauty parlor
63 _-highs; bagpiper's socks
64 Site that owns PayPal
65 Takes the plunge



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.



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

for 10 Drops from
2 Surrounded by above
3 Bound and determined plumbing problem
4 Actress Ortiz 12 Cornish game
5 Alley cat _; poultry entrées
6 Anger 14 Insufficient;
7 Whale group sparse
8 Obstinate 19 Stop
9 Apparel 22 Part of a

blackjack
25 Diving birds
27 Suffix for afford or agree
28 Coat material
29 Montana & others
30 Cost-effective
31 Rare eye color
33 Job opening
34 Strike
36 Role on "Bonanza"
38 Carried on the breeze
39 Flock sounds
41 Mailman's beat
42 Creepy creatures
44 Nursery bed
45 Dolphin's home
47 Domineering
48 Actor Gregory
49 Dentist's request
50 Rummikub piece
53 Beneficial
54 _ up; admits guilt
56 Horde
57 Neighbor of Nev.
59 Statute

Tribune Media Services

TASK

Continued from page A1

districts don't offer and 20 also agreeing the district should develop innovative curriculum.

In terms of property management suggestions, 19 task force members agreed the district should lease out "dead" properties, with the majority of those indicating that senior center facilities, employee housing or a sports complex made sense. About half said that Spring View should be utilized as a larger elementary school.

The school board's next regularly scheduled meeting is Oct. 24.

"In my personal opinion, I feel like you've given us a lot of good options, good recommendations," board President Patricia Singer said at Thursday night's meeting. "I feel like you've done your due diligence and given us what we've needed."

Also at the meeting, Supt. Michael Conroy shared detailed data about the district's financial prospects to the task force. Conroy indicated the district is overstaffed by at least 22 teachers, not including 12 transitional kindergarten classes, due to low school enrollment. That cost ranges from about \$2.3 to \$3.5 million annually.

The overall deficit for the district, which serves parts of Huntington Beach, Fountain Valley and Westminster, is nearly \$1.7 million for this school year.

"We're operating in the red," Conroy said. "How do you manage when you're operating in the red? You go to your savings account. We call that our fund balance."

Conroy presented hypothetical budget scenarios for the next five years, each based on the premise that the district reduces three teachers per year while still giving 3% salary schedule increases. The variables for each scenario were that the district does nothing, consolidates one school, two schools or four schools.

Even in the most drastic



Matt Szabo

CIRCLE VIEW Elementary School in Huntington Beach is one of the campuses the Ocean View School District Board of Trustees is considering closing.

fourth scenario, and even dipping into \$4 million that the district has allocated for facilities and technology upgrades, it would have an emergency reserve of just \$2.4 million by 2027-28, a number which would be trending downward. The emergency reserve for the current school year is about \$11 million.

In the other hypothetical scenarios, the emergency reserve by 2027-28 is either less than \$1 million or gone completely.

Enrollment in the district has steadily declined in recent years, and it most recently closed Sun View Elementary in Huntington Beach in 2018. That site now serves as an alternate site for OVSD campuses that are undergoing renovations — Mesa View Middle School in Huntington Beach this school year — using Measure R funds.

In September, task force members were asked to complete an anonymous survey. Twenty-two members said the district should implement consolidation and repurposing in successive school years, beginning with one or two schools per year. Fourteen members said they thought it should all happen quickly, essentially a "rip off the Band-Aid" approach.

Some parents on the superintendent's schools task force said after Thursday's meeting that they are hopeful their children's schools will be spared from clo-

sures. Robert Espinoza, whose wife is a teacher in the district, has two sons in the district and one graduate. He represented the district's preschool and Circle View on the task force.

"I appreciate the information given and hope that the board takes what we've said into consideration and really looks at the community impact," Espinoza said.

Keeley Pratt was on the task force representing Village View, the school two of her children attend. She remained plugged in throughout the process and consistently asked questions but said she didn't necessarily leave the last meeting Thursday night feeling satisfied.

Pratt compared the process to a college science course.

"This was lecture, and I kept waiting to go to the lab and try, experiment, understand," Pratt said. "That did not happen ... [but] I give great credit. I think Dr. Conroy and President Singer obviously have really collaborated on meaningfully including all stakeholders. We can talk about the composition, the mode of operation, we can talk about the survey. I believe [the task force] was done in good faith. Do I agree with how it was done? Not necessarily. I don't think it solved the problem, but it was a really good effort."

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BOOKS

Continued from page A1

the item.

Van Der Mark, who first brought forth the idea in June, has been seeking more oversight of children's books for years as a parent in the Ocean View School District, even before she was elected to the City Council last fall. In 2020, she initiated a successful challenge to move "Gender Queer: A Memoir" from the young adult/teen section to the adult section of the library.

She said she has had several meetings with city staff to discuss library issues and the process of procurement of children's books.

"The whole goal [is] to make our libraries the safest place for our children," Van Der Mark said. "I've been working with cleaning up our school libraries for many years, seven years. In spite of the fact that I brought forward books that were controversial, very sexually explicit books, there was always a lot of push-back."

She reiterated Tuesday night that it's her belief the new regulations don't amount to a book ban. The dictionary defines "ban" as the act of officially or legally prohibiting something.

The parent or guardian advisory board, which can include up to 21 members, will have the final say on what new children's books can hit public library shelves. It will also review books currently in the library to see if they should be moved out of the children's section.

Votes will be by simple majority, and there will not be an appeals process for any board decision, per council discussion.

"We are engaging the community," Van Der Mark said. "We're empowering the parents to have more control."

Community and library services director Ashley Wysocki confirmed to Van Der Mark that library staff often make collection development decisions based



Photos by James Carbone

EXAMPLES OF books with LGBTQ+ topics were on display in the Huntington Beach City Council chambers during Tuesday night's meeting.

on data, meaning some books are rejected. Van Der Mark asked Wysocki if that constituted a book ban, and she answered no.

Kalmick responded that there's a nuanced difference between a librarian's collection procedure and a review board of people appointed by a political board deciding about community standards for sexual content.

"If we're stopping something from entering something, I forget what that's called," Kalmick answered facetiously. "When you're 86ed from a bar, I forget what it's called. If you're counting cards in a casino and you aren't allowed back in — it's called a ban. You're banned from the casino, you're banned from the bar, and your new books that are deemed inappropriate by this committee of parents or guardians will be banned from entering the library."

Moser asked if the parental review board would be a Brown Act board, and Van Der Mark said no. Moser then asked for public live-streamed meetings, which seemed like they could be a possibility. There will be no minimum qualifications for the review board members.

"Frankly, we should be driving young people to go

to the library," Moser said. "We're driving them to the Internet, a place that is not fact-checked, it's not curated, it's not rigorously reviewed ... I want to understand why members of this council majority keep attempting to fix what is not broken."

Earlier Tuesday, the City Council held a study session where staff presented ideas for library updates, including a parental control library card and requiring minors 12 years old and younger to be accompanied by an adult at all times in the library. Van Der Mark said those ideas could complement the ideas expressed in her resolution.

The outcome of the City Council's vote went against a request from the 1st Amendment Coalition, ACLU of Southern California and Freedom to Read Foundation, which sent a joint letter Tuesday urging them to reject the resolution.

PEN America also raised concerns over the council vote in a response Wednesday morning.

"The decision from the Huntington Beach City Council should sound an alarm for residents across the state of California," said Allison Lee, PEN America Los Angeles managing di-

rector, in a statement. "To review an entire children's library collection based on an opaque claim of 'sexual content' is absurd. Librarians are not in the habit of stocking pornography on children's library shelves, and this review stands only to censor literature that children and teens deserve access to. We have seen how attacks on 'sexual content,' particularly on children's books, have been used to target books with LGBTQ+ themes and books that include characters of color. We hope the community will continue making their voices heard and maintain diligence over the identification and processes of the appointed community review board."

State Sen. Dave Min also showed up to Tuesday night's meeting to speak against the resolution, as did a few librarians. Carin Meister is a school librarian in Huntington Beach, and a mother of three daughters who use the Central Library often.

"How are you planning to finance this committee?" Meister asked the council. "Will you be purchasing 21 copies of any books deemed objectionable, so that all committee members can actually read the material in question? Or,



HUNTINGTON BEACH Mayor Pro Tem Gracey Van Der Mark and Mayor Tony Strickland listen to public comments.



HUNTINGTON BEACH residents raise signs of protest during Tuesday night's meeting.

will you be like book-banners everywhere, who incite fear with images and trigger words like 'grooming' and don't even bother to read the material in question?"

A Marina High School student said she was abused when she was younger, and books have always been a safe space and escape for her.

"At 16 years old, I am able to legally drive a 2,000-pound vehicle, and you want to take away my right to choose what books I can read," she said. "Cars can cause a lot more damage than reading a book with sexual content. Let us choose the books we see fit to read. Don't over-govern our personal choices."

Council members on the losing side of Tuesday's vote also expressed concerns that the parental advisory board could open the city to lawsuits.

But Surf City resident Kevin Otis said he supported the resolution.

"This is not a book ban," Otis said. "This resolution is about properly protecting our underage children through appropriate and

beyond-reasonable boundaries. Those in opposition, do you not believe in appropriate boundaries?"

During the council's discussion, McKeon said he couldn't comprehend why people are so in favor of children having access to sexually explicit material without parental consent.

"Can a child attend an R-rated movie?" he asked. "No, they cannot. They could with parental guidance with an adult. Could a child check out an R-rated movie at Blockbuster? No, they could not. Is that a movie ban? No ... Movies versus books, it's the same thing."

Moser responded that the movie industry rating system uses voluntary guidelines adopted by a private industry, while the book censorship issue involves the imposition of government restrictions on speech in violation of 1st Amendment freedoms.

"It's just not the same thing," she said. "It's not apples to [apples]."

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