

Daily Pilot

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Eric Licas

CANDIDATES, RESIDENTS and moderator Tom Johnson applaud at the conclusion of the Newport Beach's first City Council Candidate Forum at City Hall Thursday, Aug. 15.

Council hopefuls weigh in on Newport Beach issues

BY ERIC LICAS

Candidates vying for three Newport Beach City Council seats up for grabs in November fielded questions on housing, homelessness, public safety and more at this election cycle's first candidate forum Thursday.

About 60 people attended the discussion, which was hosted by the Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce and moderated by Tom Johnson of Stu News. The featured participants were Nancy Scarbrough and Michelle Barto competing for the second district seat to be vacated by Brad Avery; Jeff Herdman going

Housing, public safety among topics raised at election cycle's first candidate forum hosted by the Newport Beach Chamber of Commerce Thursday.

up against incumbent Noah Blom in district five; and Miles Patricola and Sara Weber seeking the seventh district seat now held by Mayor Will O'Neill.

The forum began with opening statements and a silent rapid-fire round, in which candidates indicated thumbs up or down in response to yes or no questions. Those touched on topics including climate change, rent control, traffic, the regulation of e-bikes and a stalled plan to the bury sediment from

dredging unfit for release in the ocean in Newport Bay. Candidates were also asked to express their approval or disapproval of the construction of a community pool at Lower Castaway Park and a community center in West Newport, relocation of the police station to the airport area, the widening of Mariner's Mile and a proposal to turn the position of mayor into an elected office that failed in 2022.

Candidates were then given 90 seconds to comment on spe-

cific topics, beginning with homelessness.

HOMELESSNESS

More than 70 people were living on the street in Newport Beach, according to the most recent Point in Time data revised by the county in May. Last year the City Council approved a no-camping ordinance, and in June a Supreme Court ruling in favor of the city of Grant's Pass, Ore.,

See **Hopefuls**, page A2

\$29M grant set to help convert hotel

Costa Mesa site will offer support, housing for formerly homeless and at-risk residents, veterans and seniors.

BY SARA CARDINE

The lion's share of the funding for the redevelopment of a Costa Mesa motel into permanent supportive housing for formerly homeless and at-risk individuals has finally fallen into place, meaning construction may soon begin at 1400 Bristol St.

That's where the aging and underutilized Travelodge by Wyndham Orange County Airport/Costa Mesa will be converted by Midway City-based nonprofit developer American Family Housing (AFH) into 76 studio and one-bedroom apartments under the state's Project Homekey program.

Assemblywoman Cottie Petrie Norris (D-Irvine) joined Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley Wednesday in announcing the allocation of \$29 million in grant funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development toward completion of the project.

See **Hotel**, page A3

Fountain Valley names interim chief

Michael Ishii, a former Hawthorne police chief, temporarily succeeds Matthew Sheppard, who retired in early July.

BY ANDREW TURNER

Fountain Valley residents may have noticed a new man in uniform at various events last week, as Michael Ishii began introducing himself to city staff and community members.

Ishii will serve as the interim police chief while the city carries out a search to fill the position. The City Council made it official on Tuesday night, when the governing body approved a contract to have Ishii lead the department as a retired annuitant.

The contract recognizes Aug. 5 as the start date, and it will remain in effect for one year or until a permanent police chief is hired. A retired annuitant may not exceed 960 hours within a fiscal year. Ishii will be compen-



Michael Ishii

See **Chief**, page A2

Gilchrist says she's retiring from water polo



James Carbone

KALEIGH GILCHRIST dishes the ball to a teammate during an April exhibition match against Australia. She has announced her retirement from the U.S. women's senior national team.

BY MATT SZABO

Kaleigh Gilchrist walked onto the Newport Harbor High pool deck for the first time at age 8, ready to dive into the sport of water polo.

Twenty-four years later, she said goodbye Thursday, announcing her retirement from the United States women's senior national team.

The numbers eight and 24 are meaningful to Gilchrist. She was a big fan of the late Kobe Bryant, who wore those jerseys for the Los Angeles Lakers.

Next weekend, she's getting married — on Aug. 24 (8/24).

"The truth is, part of me wants to keep playing," Gilchrist said in a post on Instagram. "I love the grind, I love the challenge, I love competing and most of all I love the connections. I truly believe at the ripe age of 32 I can still improve and get better. However, I also know the excellence this sport demands and the standard that is needed to keep up with this talented group of women.

"Kobe said it best — 'My heart can take the pounding. My mind can handle the grind."

See **Gilchrist**, page A5

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HOTEL

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The award will be added to \$4 million committed by Costa Mesa City Council in June 2023 and an additional \$3 million from the city of Newport Beach, in exchange for a portion of the site's occupancy. Orange County contributed another \$7 million and 48 program-based vouchers toward the project's \$48-million price tag.

Petrie Norris called the grant award a "strong commitment" by state, county and city leaders to provide needed housing and services to the area's most vulnerable individuals.

"I'm proud to have advocated for these state funds and partner with American Family Housing to advance this much needed project to create a safe and nurturing environment for those unable to find stable housing in our community," the assemblywoman said in a statement Wednesday.

Orange County Supervi-

sor Katrina Foley in 2020, as the former mayor of Costa Mesa, partnered with city and county officials to temporarily shelter homeless and at-risk residents in shuttered motel rooms during the pandemic as part of Homekey's precursor, Project Roomkey.

Foley said the interagency investment in the Bristol Street conversion will help "turn another downtrodden, crime magnet, motel into permanent supportive housing for our veterans, seniors and homeless residents."

"The solution to the homelessness crisis requires aggressive redevelopment and partnership between developers and the state, county and federal government," she said in Wednesday's release.

The state allocation starts a time clock on the project, required to be completed within 12 months of the grant award. Nate Robbins, who oversees Costa Mesa's bridge shelter operations as the city's neighborhood im-

provement manager, estimated the housing development could be completed by fall of 2025.

"Right after it's done we need to move people in," Robbins said Thursday, explaining that while 48 of the 76 units will go to those in the county's care coordination database, the remaining 28 units will be specifically dedicated to Costa Mesa and Newport Beach residents.

"On the day that project opens, 28 Costa Mesa and Newport formerly homeless residents will be given the keys to their new home. It's an amazing project."

The project Home Key site is Costa Mesa's second. Earlier this year, the city celebrated the opening of an 88-unit complex called Mesa Vista at a 1.17-acre former Motel 6 near the 55 Freeway.

For the Travelodge conversion, American Family Housing will not only oversee construction of the Travelodge site but will provide on-site support services to those who live there.



File Photo

TRAVELODGE BY Wyndham Orange County Airport/Costa Mesa will be converted into 76 studio and one-bedroom apartments under the state's Project Homekey program.

As an added benefit, a commercial kitchen space on the 3.5-acre property — currently leased by Mediterranean restaurant Pom & Olive — has agreed to offer jobs and training to tenants.

Costa Mesa Mayor John Stephens said while the city has made great strides in helping get people off the

streets, particularly since opening a permanent bridge shelter in 2021 that currently offers 85 beds and will soon go up to 100, there's much more to be done.

"The challenge we have in our bridge shelter is we have a lot of people who are ready for housing, but we don't have any places to

house them," he said Thursday. "This is 76 permanent supportive units. Coming together with our partnership with Newport, we are doing our part to address the issue of finding permanent supportive housing."

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HOPEFULS

Continued from page A2

how the city will go about that process, plans for an additional 8,174 homes. Supporters of the plan the city is currently trying to implement say that buffer is needed in part due to the challenge of meeting requirements for the inclusion of affordable housing in a valuable coastal property market.

In Newport Beach a household qualifies as low income if it earns 80% of the city's median wages, which were of \$200,000 for families and \$70,000 for non-family households, according to data from the 2020 Census. That's roughly \$160,000 and \$56,000, respectively.

Many candidates shied away from using the term "low-income" in reference to housing in Newport Beach. Instead, they said the city lacks "workforce housing."

"When we're talking about affordable housing we're talking about our kids," Barto said. "We're talking about friends of mine whose kids want to come back and live in this city, work close to their parents."

She and Blom expressed support for the current version of Newport Beach's housing element, while Weber saw the challenges in implementing it as opportunities to "get creative" and "think outside the box." Blom said he was enthusiastic about future development in the John Wayne Airport area.

"I kind of think of it as the Georgetown to our D.C. We can build more things over there. We can add a little bit of height, and it adds to the character and charm of who we are," Blom said. "We have Newport Center as well. We're gonna keep working on quality ... it's not about affordable, it's about workforce [housing]."

Scarborough said the city's housing element "needs work," while Herdman said, "We basically need to start all over with a whole new plan." They both took issue with the difference between Newport Beach's RHNA requirement and the number of units the city has decided to zone for. They said they want to explore ways to fund and support the development of more low and very-low income housing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Candidates were mostly optimistic about the way the city attracts and supports local businesses. Scarborough said a significant amount of red tape still manages to slow progress and suggested appointing a "business liaison" to help guide people through paperwork.

Herdman called for the reimplementation of business improvement districts (BIDs), privately directed

groups that are publicly sanctioned to coordinate supplementary services, activities and promotion of specific areas in a city. Blom was one of the council members who voted to rescind them and noted that funding for BIDs comes from an assessment paid by the local businesses they cover.

"Typically in a small business environment, we don't say: 'If only the government could help us more,'" Blom said. "Usually it's if only the government could stay out of our lives things would be a lot better," and that's how we feel here."

He went on to say that addressing adjacent issues like transportation would be the best way to promote business in Newport Beach. He suggested developing a trolley system to promote shopping and reduce parking congestion.

DISTRICT-SPECIFIC ISSUES

Candidates were asked to choose specific topics affecting their respective districts that they would prioritize. Barto and Scarborough of the second district both raised the issue of speeding and other hazards related to e-bikes, with the latter pointing out that the county, Costa Mesa and Manhattan Beach have recently begun regulating the widely used vehicles.

"I live at the corner of Clay and Tustin, and I can tell you that the education that's happening is not enough," Scarborough said. "There are kids blowing through there without stopping, without looking every day."

She also called for the development of a recreation center in Newport Heights, while Barto championed the preservation of Lower Castaways Park and the harbor.

In District 5, Blom reiterated his support for repurposing and investing in areas recently cleared of

homeless encampments. He suggested creating a fire station at the Newport Beach Transit Center on Avocado Drive, near MacArthur Boulevard and San Joaquin Hills Road. He also called for the preservation of the Balboa Island Ferry.

Herdman said he could closely monitor the progress of the 25-year infrastructure plan on Balboa Island and work to ensure John Wayne Airport remains faithful to a settlement agreement curbing noise and the expansion of runways into the city.

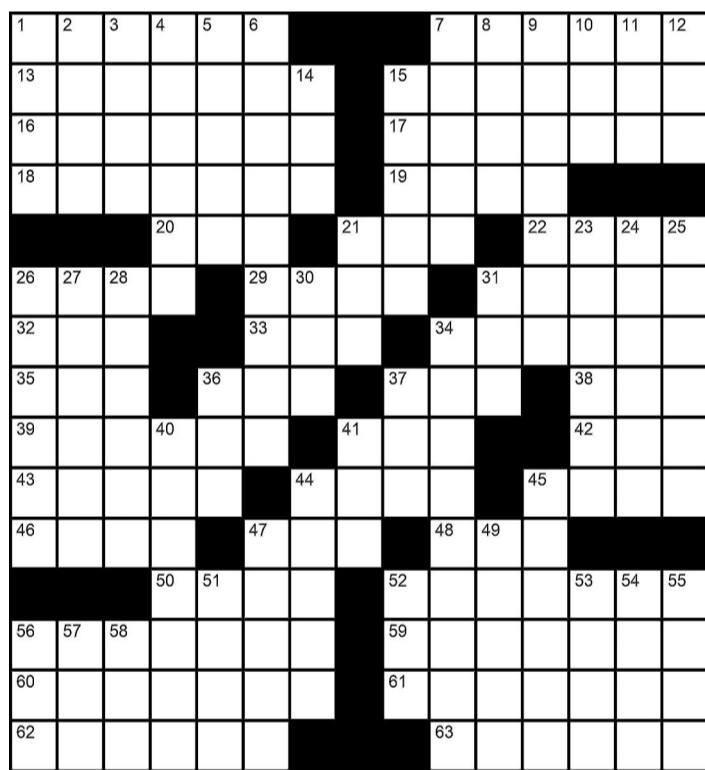
Patricola expressed concern for the elevated risk of wildfire along Buck Gully in District 7 and said he'd like to ensure all residents have emergency plans in place. He also raised the issue of potential e-bike regulation. Weber said she would focus her efforts on public safety and support the police and fire departments.

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THE DAILY COMMUTER PUZZLE

By Stella Zawistowski

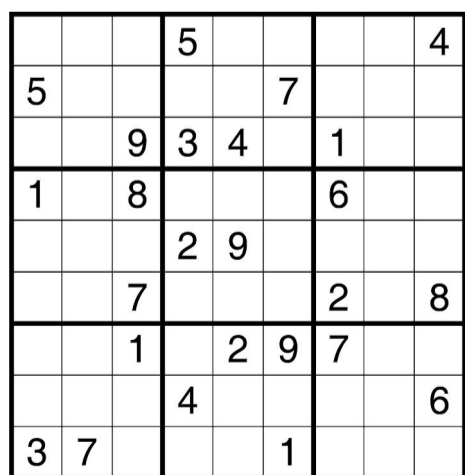
- ACROSS
1 In the direction of
7 Necklace parts
13 Simple and severe
15 What tents provide
16 Harness race horse
17 Baby predator birds
18 Say mean things about
19 "Swing and a ___!"
20 Thumbs-downs
21 Christmas conifer
22 Hype up
26 Earth, ___ & Fire
29 Looks over
31 Christmas Eve visitor
32 Yoko ___
33 Our star
34 Floppy French hats
35 1006, in Roman numerals
36 Total
37 Sheep's sound
38 Collection
39 Chess piece
41 Pale with exhaustion
42 Extreme anger
43 Dined at home: 2 wds.
44 Part of a deck
45 ___ up (admit something)
46 Exam
47 "It ___ to be true!"
48 Arch city: Abbr.
50 Some boxing wins: Abbr.
52 Sentence parts
56 Team with the ball, in football
59 Most beloved
60 River boats
61 Pasta specification: 2 wds.
62 Plot surprises
63 Anne Rice



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.

- DOWN
1 "Bye!"
2 Yours and mine
3 Card-playing tournament: Abbr.
4 Go to
5 Old-school, but cool
6 Puts on nice clothes: 2 wds.
7 Recliner, e.g.
8 Staying power
9 Standout athlete
10 Sault ___ Marie
11 Companion animal
12 Grads-to-be: Abbr.
14 Before, poetically
15 Big rigs

- 21 Swampland
23 Baby's garment
24 Says
25 Samples
26 Aussie marsupial
27 Ask to a party
28 Bangs and booms
30 "Tasty!"
31 Saltwater body
34 Outdoor music venue
36 Male offspring
37 Pub
40 Players like Ted Williams
41 Used to be
44 Phone protectors
45 Emergency signals
47 Garden tubes
49 Swap
51 Make a scarf
52 Smartphone precursor: Abbr.
53 Shipped
54 ¿Cómo ___ Usted?
55 Editor's marking
56 A lot, poetically
57 Not many
58 End of the workweek: Abbr.

Tribune Media Services

South Coast Repertory advertisement for 'Little Shop of Horrors' and 'Joan'. Includes ticket prices (\$40, \$35), dates (Sept 21-Oct 19, Oct 27-Nov 24), and cast members (Howard Ashman, Alan Menken, Michael Ray, U.S. Bank, Daniel Goldstein, David Ivers).

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