

The Week That Was^{TW2}

September 18 – September 21, 2023



1. Sean's Schedule

I will be out of the office the week of October 1. I will be available intermittently by cell phone, on east coast time. Gavin will be acting city manager in my absence.

2. Patriots Day Parade Update

On Thursday, the Patriots Day Parade Committee voted to ban the discharge of all firearms, including blanks, in future Patriots Day parades. This action was taken in response to community concerns regarding the "Spurs and Satin" group firing blanks from pistols at the end of the parade in prior years. "Spurs and Satin" will be allowed to participate in the parade and may carry period-appropriate guns as props but will not be permitted to fire them.

3. LBUSD Board to Consider a Facilities Master Plan

On Thursday, September 28, the Laguna Beach Unified School Board will convene a study session to receive from its staff a District-wide facilities master plan update, including evaluating the merits/feasibility of renovating the Laguna Beach High School and Community pool. Depending on the Board's action that night, staff may ask the Council in October to appoint a subcommittee to work with the District to discuss the possible implications of planned changes, if any, to the pool facility.

4. New Pickleball Courts at Alta Laguna Park

On August 22, 2023, the City Council authorized staff to convert a tennis court at Alta Laguna Park into three dedicated pickleball courts to help accommodate the growing demand for pickleball courts. This week, City contractors are installing three new pickleball courts at Alta Laguna Park. When the project is completed early next week, there will be six pickleball and four tennis courts at Alta Laguna Park.

5. Positive Covid-19 Cases at the Alternative Sleeping Location

The second half of September has witnessed a surge in positive COVID-19 test results among participants and staff at the Alternative Sleeping Location (ASL). As of Wednesday, September 13, six participants and seven staff members had tested positive for COVID-19. In response, Assistant to the City Manager Jeremy Frimond worked with Community Outreach Officer Brian Griep to confer with the Friendship Shelter staff to devise a strategy aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19 within the congregate living shelter. The following measures were implemented:

- Mandatory mask-wearing within the shelter.
- A seven-day suspension of new enrollments, van transportation services, and daytime drop-in services.
- Reintroduction of the temporary tent program on the premises for individuals who feel more comfortable staying outdoors rather than in the congregate living area.

All enrolled participants underwent COVID-19 testing on Wednesday, September 20, with no new cases reported. Of those participants who had tested positive the previous week, four remain COVID-19 positive. Staff will conduct an evaluation to determine lifting the COVID-19 mitigation measures on Monday, September 25. Staff are confident that the program will persist in its mission of serving individuals experiencing homelessness while concurrently fostering the safest environment possible.

6. Update on Solar Panel Installation Assessment at City Facilities

The City Council directed staff to work with Compass Energy Solutions (CES) to enroll solar panel projects for the ACT V parking lot and the Susi Q Senior Center in SoCal Edison's Net Energy Metering Aggregation program (NEM 2.0). Staff initiated enrollment while also commencing the design and entitlement phases. However, shortly thereafter, CES informed staff that it had erroneously recommended the NEM 2.0 program, as the projects failed to meet the qualifying criteria. Staff will furnish a supplemental memorandum to the City Council in their weekly packet, elaborating on this summary and outlining its proposed course of action moving forward.

7. Standards of Cover and Community Risk Assessment

In the fall of 2022, the Fire Department contracted Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) to conduct a Standards of Cover and Community Risk Assessment for the City of Laguna Beach. The study focuses on Fire Department resource deployment, fire station locations, apparatus, and personnel that match community needs. The presentation of the findings will be held at the EDPC on October 2, 2023, and is tentatively scheduled for a City Council shortly thereafter. *Fire Chief King is pleased to offer individual briefings to councilmembers at your convenience before the item appears on your agenda.*

8. Police Officer Recruitment and Selection Process

On Saturday, September 23, 2023, the City will host 46 Police Officer Recruit applicants to participate in an initial selection and assessment process. Applicants will spend the morning taking a written exam and participating in a Physical Agility Test. The Human Resources and Police departments work collaboratively to coordinate this single-day event for the convenience of the candidates and to expedite the recruitment process. Candidates who successfully pass these assessments will have the opportunity to proceed to an interview at a future date.

9. Updated Weekend Hours at Community Pool

As reported last week, Saturday public swim hours at the Community Pool were adjusted to 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. effective August 26 in order to accommodate Laguna Beach High School athletic programs. In response to resident feedback and following additional coordination with the Laguna Beach Unified School District, the City will expand public swim hours to 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sundays, effective October 1, in order to accommodate requests for earlier-morning lap swim capacity on weekends. This change will remain in effect until the end of the Fall quarter, at which point the City and School District will reassess the pool hours based on community and student needs.

10. Bluebird Canyon Drive Traffic Calming

Last week, traffic calming measures were completed along Bluebird Canyon Drive between Cress Street and Rancho Laguna Road. Traffic calming measures consisted of narrowed traffic lanes and widened lane striping that were completed by the City's contractor. It also included installation of a speed table by the City's Public Works

Department, with the work overseen by Maintenance Supervisor Todd Henry. For one week after the installation, the Police Department recorded speeds near the speed table and determined that of 14,000 vehicles, only three warranted citations, suggesting that vehicular speeds have reduced.

11. Sidewalk Friction Surface Treatment – Pearl Street

At the recent APWA PWX conference, Public Works staff connected with a vendor who supplies an easily applied, low-cost friction surface treatment. The vendor offered to assist with a demonstration project. On Thursday, the vendor conducted a demonstration of the material on the surface of a sidewalk near the beach access on Pearl Street. The installation included thorough cleaning of the sidewalk surface by pressure washing and wire brushes, followed by installing a two-part skid resistant product which dried quickly and allowed the surface to reopen within hours. Staff will monitor its effectiveness for potential application to improve slip resistance on steep and sandy surfaces Citywide.

12. Recreation Committee Reviews Playground Master Plan

Assistant City Engineer Frank Lopez attended the most recent Recreation Committee meeting to solicit input on conditions, desires, and priorities for City playgrounds as part of the Playground Master Plan. In addition to creating a subcommittee, the Recreation Committee indicated a desire for widespread community outreach to solicit input.

13. AQMD Site Visits Citywide

South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) met with Wastewater Mechanical & Facilities Supervisor Mat Milroy, and Senior Fleet Maintenance Supervisor Austin Comp, to inspect backup generators at various wastewater lift station sites, City Hall, and the Corp Yard, as well as fuel tanks, propane tanks, and our fuel management system. The inspections were conducted by AQMD to ensure permits for our equipment are current and compliance measures are being followed. Initial feedback from the AQMD inspector was positive, with follow-up paperwork and other data being submitted to AQMD this week per their request.

14. Aliso Berm Emergency Maintenance Activities

On Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning, Public Works Department staff performed emergency maintenance work at Aliso Beach, adjacent to the mouth of Aliso Creek (the “Aliso berm”). City staff and residents had noted the deteriorated conditions adjacent to the Aliso berm during the prior week, with the creek bending northward several hundred feet and connecting to the ocean. The rate of creek flow and its northward direction was rapidly eroding sand and causing unsafe conditions for both beachgoers and the adjacent properties. By Saturday, it constituted an immediate threat to public health and safety. Public Works maintenance staff were dispatched to move sand in such a manner to realign the creek flow, which had already breached the Aliso berm, to be perpendicular to the coastline which arrested the sand erosion and abated the public health and safety threat. On Monday, staff notified the Regional Board that the maintenance work had been performed. It should be noted that this work was done without a permit from the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Board); preparation of the required permits have been ongoing since the City took over maintenance from the County of Orange earlier this year. Draft permit applications to the Regional Board and the Army Corps of Engineers prepared by the City’s consultant and received Sep 20; final permit applications will be submitted to the Regional Board and Army Corps by the end of the week.

15. National Preparedness Month Events

Last Saturday, September 15, the Fire Department and Marine Safety Department hosted an emergency preparedness event at Fire Station 1, where staff and CERT volunteers provided information on fire safety, evacuation planning, emergency kits, and water safety.

On Monday, September 18, the Fire Department held an event at the Susi-Q for the Laguna Beach Seniors group titled "Are you prepared for emergencies & disasters?".

On Tuesday, September 19, the Fire Department held a Wildland Fire and Emergency Preparedness Town Hall Meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to update the community on projects identified in the 2019 Wildfire Mitigation Report as well as educate the public on measures they can take to prepare for a wildfire.

16. Patrol Trainings

K-9 Corporals Angeloni and McGuire are finishing up their second week at SWAT school. Ofc. Milone is finishing up her second week at Drug Recognition (DRE) school. Ofc. Cintas is at BATI interview and interrogation training.

17. Remarkable Patrol Arrests

On September 14, 2023, at 0730 hours, officers responded to Terra Restaurant in reference to several gunshots heard by an officer in the area of the Pageant of the Masters and Terra Laguna restaurant, located at 650 Laguna Canyon Road. Security guards for the Terra Laguna property were in the area at the time and had no concerned reaction, which was suspicious. This is an ongoing investigation.

On September 16, 2023, at 0101 hours, Laguna Beach police and fire personnel responded to 540 South Coast Highway for a three-vehicle traffic collision involving two parked vehicles. The driver, Derrick Castro was placed under arrest for felony DUI, due to injuring his passenger.

On September 18, 2023, at 2039 hours, officers responded to the area of Laguna Canyon Road and El Toro in reference to an Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) hit of a stolen vehicle/carjacking suspect vehicle. Officers located the vehicle at 650 Laguna Canyon Road and attempted to initiate a vehicle enforcement stop at Canyon Acres. The suspect vehicle immediately fled outbound Laguna Canyon Road toward the 405. An airship was requested but did not arrive prior to the pursuit being canceled. The black BMW (8WLF982) stolen earlier in the day was out of Inglewood.

This is the second straight day we have had ALPR hit of stolen vehicle/carjacking suspects. Yesterday at 1438 hours, officers located the BMW out of Glendora that was involved in a carjacking. Four suspects were taken into custody. At 1516 hours, a second carjacking suspect vehicle (Glendora) hit the ALPRs but was not located by LBPD officers. That vehicle, Dodge Charger (6SDV945), was recovered by Santa Ana PD without plates, 09/17/23.

It is unconfirmed that the same crews are responsible for all three stolen vehicles/carjackings, but the circumstances are too similar to be coincidence.

18. Miscellaneous Events

September 19: Actor Jason Mamoia (Aquaman) signed autographs to promote his new vodka. PD was able to mitigate the crowd and traffic impacts.

September 19: Wildland Fire Education and Mitigation town hall meeting. Forty-seven people attended in person and 17 people were on Zoom.

September 21: Ten-year anniversary of Officer Jon Coutchie's End of Watch:

- 10:00 a.m. the Aliso Creek Bridge dedication was outstanding and well attended.
- 4:30 the annual remembrance ceremony that took place at the "Eternal Legacy" police memorial in front of the police department was also well attended.

19. Press Release from the Los Angeles County Police Chief's Association

The attached Press Release is a serious concern. Offenders for car theft, car burglaries, thefts of property of any value, retail and commercial thefts and burglaries, possession of stolen property, forgery, drug sales, and many other crimes will now be a "cite and release." This will have an impact on Orange County law enforcement and will further strain our courts.

20. September Environmental Sustainability Committee Meeting

The September 18 meeting agenda of the ESC included the following notable items:

- Marine Protected Area Classifications (Decadal Review Report)

The Committee received a presentation from Calla Allison, Director of the MPA Collaborative Network and former Laguna Beach Marine Safety employee. This presentation was in response to the recent statement by the Fish and Game Commission that it is accepting petitions from the public to consider minor changes to marine protected areas until November 20, 2023. No action was taken by the Committee during the presentation. However, there was a public comment made by the Laguna Bluebelt, recommending that the City submit a petition to expand the City's no-take designation throughout the City (limited fishing is permitted from Totuava Beach south through the City's southern border.) It is anticipated that this same request will be made to the City Council until the petition period closes.

It is noted that the City Council's 2023 Legislative Platform supports the Marine Protected Areas as currently designated. Additionally, the City Council submitted a letter to the California Fish and Game Commission on February 6, 2023, as part of the Decal Review public comment period. In the letter, the City stated, "...the City is opposed to any changes to its Marine Protected Areas, including any efforts to modify the regulations related to sportfishing. Staff suggests that as the Commission continues to evaluate the City's Marine Protected Area Network over the next decade, that it not make any changes to remove any areas from their current designations or allow sportfishing in protected zones."

- Integrated Pest Management Plan

ESC recommended that the City Council consider adopting an integrated pest management (IPM) policy based on City of Malibu's Earth Friendly Management Plan. The item received approximately 15 public speakers. City Council and staff liaisons liaison will meet to discuss next steps for the item.

21. September 20, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting Summary

The Planning Commission's Wednesday meeting included the following noteworthy items and associated outcomes:

Seahorse Lounge

The Planning Commission considered the revocation of a Conditional Use Permit, which granted approval to allow the onsite consumption of beer and wine and prepackaged specialty foods within an existing retail store. Subsequently, the business illegally expanded the uses to include restaurant/food service, outdoor dining, live music, and a coffee shop. The Commission reviewed the code enforcement history, Municipal Code violations, and conditions of approval violations. After deliberation, the Commission unanimously voted to revoke the Conditional Use Permit.

Downtown Action Plan

The Commission received a presentation and progress report from staff on the re-initiation of the Downtown Action Plan. The presentation outlined the prior history and the comments received from the initial Planning Commission hearing. The Commission provided additional comments and requested the creation of a subcommittee to fully analyze the Downtown Action Plan in connection with the update to the Downtown Specific Plan. The Commission requested that staff consult with the City Attorney regarding the creation of a subcommittee that includes Commissioners that presently serve on a separate subcommittee for the Downtown Promenade project. Staff will provide a response to the Commission at the next meeting.

Laguna College of Art + Design

The Commission considered approval of a Conditional Use Permit, Design Review, and a Coastal Development Permit to demolish an existing light industrial building and construct a new Laguna College of Art + Design student center building. Project amenities include multipurpose conference rooms, social spaces, a café/lounge, student classrooms and studio areas, offices, and a gallery. Site improvements include a parking lot and landscaping. The Commission reviewed the project and the CEQA Mitigated Negative Declaration and voted unanimously to conditionally approve the project and requested that a revised landscape plan and revised building colors be presented at the November 1 Planning Commission meeting.

Sean Joyce
Interim City Manager