

The Week That Was^{TW2}

October 2 – October 5, 2023



1. City of Laguna Beach Awarded \$200,000 Grant

The City has been awarded a \$200,000 competitive grant from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) via its Sustainable Communities Program (SCP) to support the City's Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) Update, which includes an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). This project was identified by the City Council as a priority project and was included as part of the Community Development department's Workplan for FY 2023-25. Special thanks to CD Program Analyst, Louie Lacasella, for having the initiative and ability to obtain this grant.

2. Design Review Board: 2095 Temple Hills Continuance

The design review modifications at 2095 Temple Hills was continued and removed from the October 12 Design Review Board meeting, allowing staff time to review comments received regarding the project.

3. Planning Commission: Dornin Office Building at 1110 Glenneyre

The Planning Commission considered approval of a Design Review to modernize the façade of the building that currently features a craftsman style design. The modifications included replacing existing windows and doors, reduction of eave overhangs, replacement of roof material with standing seam metal, new landscaping and hardscape, and replacement of exterior siding. The Commission reviewed the project and the CEQA Notice of Exemption and after deliberation, voted unanimously to continue the project to a date uncertain and directed the applicant to revise the project per the Planning Commission comments and recommendations. Specifically, the Commission directed the applicant to retain the existing brick work and trees. Once the applicant submits a revised plan, the project will be scheduled for a future public hearing with the Planning Commission.

4. LOVE Laguna Beach Volunteer Day

LOVE Laguna Beach will take place this Saturday, October 7. The 2nd annual community event brings local volunteers together to make our City a better place. A kick-off meeting will take place at the Community and Susi Q Center from 8 am to 9 am. Then, from 9 am to 12 pm, volunteers of all ages will work on their assigned projects to improve the community. More information: www.lovelagunabeach.org.

5. Laguna Open Beach Volleyball Tournament

The annual Laguna Open Beach Volleyball Tournament will take place at Main Beach on Friday, October 13 through Sunday, October 15. Admission is free.

6. Tennis and Pickleball Updates

The two Irvine Bowl tennis courts near the Festival of Arts will be closed for maintenance and resurfacing starting on Monday, October 9 for approximately 10 days. In addition, work on the three new dedicated pickleball courts at Alta Laguna Park is now complete, and the courts are open for play, with a total of six pickleball courts at that location.

7. Community Meeting for New Fire Station Four

On October 3, Fire Department staff, Public Works, and architect Kelley Needham from PBK met with residents of South Laguna at Fire Station Four. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce community members to the functional components of a fire station and hear about concepts for designing a replacement station at 31796 Coast Highway. There was a significant amount of community input and will be thoughtfully taken into consideration as the design process gets underway.

8. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)

The city planning team finalized the LHMP and submitted it to the State for review this past Monday. Cal OES (Governor's Office of Emergency Services) has 45 calendar days to review and provide comments and feedback on the plan. Following approval from Cal OES, the LHMP will be forwarded to FEMA for final approval. While FEMA also has a 45-day window to review, it is worth noting that due to the extensive review by Cal OES, FEMA typically does not require the full 45 days. Once approved by FEMA staff will return to the City Council for local adoption of the LHMP.

9. Outdoor Warning Installation on Canyon Acres

The Emergency Management Division has been working to finalize the Outdoor Warning System expansion at 515 Canyon Acres Drive. Based on comments and questions from neighbors in the area regarding the project, the item was withdrawn from Administrative Design Review. The Fire Department plans to meet with the neighbors and bring the item back to a future Design Review Board meeting.

10. Laguna Royale Condominiums

The Planning Commission considered approval of a Design Review and a Coastal Development Permit for repairs to elevated deck areas and removal and replacement of deck railings with glass guardrails at all units and common area decks. The project was conditioned with a requirement for bird-safe glass, which helps prevent birds from crashing into the railing. A coastal development permit was also requested for "after-the-fact" repairs and modifications to the structures and several of the units. The Commission reviewed the project and the CEQA Notice of Exemption and after deliberation voted unanimously to conditionally approve the project.

11. Moss Street Beach Access Improvements Groundbreaking

A groundbreaking ceremony for the Moss Street Beach Access Improvements Project was held on October 2. In attendance were Mayor Pro Tem Sue Kempf, Senator Dave Min, Assemblymember Diane Dixon, Councilmember Weiss, Rounaghi and Orgill, Orange County Supervisor Katrina Foley, City staff, members of the press, and residents. Senator Min secured funding for this project. Construction for the project is scheduled to start on October 16, with an expected completion by June 2024.

12. Cleo Street Beach Access Improvements Neighborhood Meeting

On October 3, Public Works Project Manager Alpha Santos and Assistant Director of Public Works Tom Perez held a neighborhood meeting for the Cleo Street Beach Access Improvements Project. Staff and the City's design consultant, Stantec, presented concept plans to community members in attendance. Input received during the meeting will be taken into consideration as the design concept is refined in preparation for a future Design Review at the Planning Commission.

13. Utility Underground Assessment Deferment Loan Program Update

The Public Works and Finance Department is internally reviewing the utility undergrounding district assessment deferment program guidelines in response to City Council feedback from the September 26 meeting. Potential changes include expanding eligibility by modifying age and income criteria. We plan to present these changes to the City Council soon. *Mark McAvoy and Tom Perez are available for individual briefings to council members before the item appears on the agenda.*

14. Compost Giveaway Event Success

On Saturday, the City, in partnership with OC Waste & Recycling, hosted a successful drive-thru Compost Giveaway at the Act V Parking Lot. The event was organized by Administrative Analyst Ashley Moran and assisted by Recycling Technician Brandon Contreras, along with staff assistance from the Orange County Conservation Corps, who provided seven (7) staff. Approximately 70 vehicles drove through the event, picking up over 300 bags of compost, allowing the City to distribute to residents a total of 4.9 tons of compost from the Irvine Bee Canyon Greenery at the Bowerman Landfill. OC Waste & Recycling creates the compost, which is STA (Seal of Testing Assurance) Certified by the U.S. Compost Council as compost derived from curbside residential green and organic waste. These giveaways help build awareness of the importance of diverting organic waste from landfills and reducing greenhouse gases through composting.

15. Patrol Training

This week Department personnel attended mandatory Title 15 training for operating a Temporary Holding Facility (our Jail).

Officers Mrozek and Milone begin a two-week Crime Scene Investigation training.

Officer Manzano, Officer Milone, and Senior Dispatcher Gilstrap acquired their FAA-Part 107 UAS pilot license and completed drone training at the range.

16. Patrol

On Thursday, September 28, at about 12:50 am, LBPD and LBFD personnel responded to 31792 Coast Highway, South Coast Water District, for a structure fire. Personnel arrived and extinguished the fire which destroyed the small, unoccupied storage structure. A few hours later, an officer on an unrelated call at MHLB discovered a patient with burns to his feet. An interview was conducted, and the subject was arrested for felony arson.

On September 28, at about 10:20 am, an officer on proactive patrol was flagged down by a pedestrian at Alta Laguna Extension. The pedestrian indicated he saw a single occupant in a vehicle and a bullet hole in the driver's side rear window. After the area was secure, officers used various tools to check on the subject and determined the situation was a suicide. Officers found a weapon and several notes at the scene. The adult subject was a Lake Forest resident.

On October 1, at about 7:30 pm, a resident reported a 9th-grade El Toro High School student posted an Instagram story that showed a picture of the student standing at Thurston Middle School displaying gang signs. In another photo, he appeared to be inside a residence and had what appeared to be a firearm in his waistband. School Resource Officers worked with County assets to investigate the incident. The student was identified and interviewed. It was determined the weapon was a replica, and there were no threats to any person or facility. The investigation was documented, and school officials were notified.

17. Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO)

Working with Public Works on improving the area underneath the Brown's Park boardwalk to prevent future homeless encampments.

18. Traffic

The traffic section will be hosting another Loud Exhaust and Speed Enforcement task force event in October.

19. Park Ranger

Park Rangers have modified their schedule with the end of summer. They will assist the HLO with homeless encampments, sleeping in public, and other related community concerns.

20. Parking Services

PSO/AI applicant interviews were completed last week, and second interviews will be conducted next week.

21. Other Event

Several employees, including Cooper, responded to Manhattan Beach PD to assist with Peer Support following the on-duty death of their Motor Officer.

22. Off-Duty Marine Safety Employee Injured in Crosswalk

On October 1, just after 7:00 pm, a Marine Safety employee was struck by a car while crossing the street at the designated crosswalk at PCH and Table Rock. The incident occurred after he completed his shift while he was walking to his vehicle. The employee was transported to Mission Hospital, where he underwent a thorough evaluation, including CT scans and X-rays. Fortunately, he was released with only minor injuries. Despite feeling sore, he is in good spirits and is recovering at home.

23. American Public Works Association (APWA) Training

Last week, the Public Works and Utilities Department sent five employees to attend the APWA Public Works Institute in Downey, CA. After three days of intensive training, Maintenance Lead Worker Tom Sanchez, Project Manager Alpha Santos-Guinto, Administrative Analyst Ashley Moran, Deputy Director Reza Jafari, and Deputy Director Richard Gonzales each received a Certificate of Completion in Advanced Public Works Management.

24. Cleanup of Construction Materials on 3rd Street Hill

At 3:30 pm on Friday, September 29, the City was notified that a contractor had accidentally dropped several construction steel I-beams on 3rd Street near Mermaid Street, impeding traffic along the 3rd Street hill. Maintenance Supervisor Todd Henry took the call, quickly assembled a two-man team with heavy equipment, and dispatched them to the area to remove the materials blocking the roadway. Equipment Operators Elias Campos and Rick Weiers moved the construction materials off to the side while the Police Department provided temporary traffic control. By 5 pm, both directions of travel were opened to the public.

Gavin Curran
Acting City Manager