

The Week That Was^{TW2}

December 11 – December 14, 2023



1. Junior Lifeguard Program Swim Test Dates and Registration

Swim testing dates and registration opened for the City's Junior Lifeguard Program this week. The Junior Lifeguard Program is for youth between 8 and 15, placed in groups by ability and age. Junior Guards have fun while learning ocean safety, rescue techniques, beach activities, physical fitness. They also learn about Marine Safety operations in an environment that emphasizes courtesy, respect, and good sportsmanship. Approximately 500 children participate in the program each year. [Click here](#) for more information about swim test dates and registration.

2. BRIC Grant Submitted – SCE Financial Commitment Letter Received

On Wednesday December 13, staff submitted a Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant application to CalOES, for the undergrounding of overhead utility lines along Laguna Canyon Road, from south of Canyon Acres to El Toro Road. The requested grant amount is \$45 million, which is seventy-five percent of the estimated project cost of \$60 million. The City would be required to provide \$15 million in matching funds.

Staff has been working extensively with Southern California Edison (SCE), owner of the majority of the overhead utility lines, to have SCE partner with the City and provide a portion (or all) of the matching funds. This week, SCE provided the City with a financial commitment letter stating that it would contribute approximately \$5 million of various types of funding credits. In addition, SCE stated in its letter that the electrical distribution lines along LCR have been identified as an eligible project for SCE's Targeted Undergrounding (TUG) program. Under its TUG program, if determined to be physically and financially feasible (and subject to CPUC approval of the program), SCE would underground the electrical distribution lines.

Estimated cost of undergrounding the electrical distribution lines is approximately \$23 million. If the City's grant application is approved, BRIC grant funds are estimated to become available in 2025, at the earliest. Assistant Director of Public Works Tom Perez is the City staff person coordinating all these efforts with SCE, Caltrans, CalOES, and others.

3. Woods Cove Undergrounding Utility Assessment District Approved

At the December 12 City Council meeting, assessment ballots were tabulated for the proposed Woods Cove Underground Utility Assessment District 2014-2. The results were 61% in favor of forming the assessment district. Based on the results, City Council adopted a resolution approving formation of the district and approving the project and

awarded a construction contract to Hot Line Construction to perform the work. Next steps include sending cash collection letters to properties within the district and sending information on the Assessment Deferral Loan Program, followed by initiation of a bond sale for the district. The bond sale is anticipated to occur in Spring 2024, with construction anticipated to begin in Summer 2024. Senior Project Manager, Pierre Sawaya, is the City staff person overseeing this project.

4. Temporary Skate Ramps at Laguna Beach Community and Recreation Center

This week, temporary skate ramps were delivered to the Laguna Beach Community and Recreation Center (LBCRC). The ramps are being assembled and are expected to be open to the public after the New Year's holiday. The skate ramps will be located in the courtyard area in front of the main classroom building and will be used for City-sponsored skate classes and camps, as well as for free skating during limited daytime hours. The placement of the temporary skate ramps was approved by City Council as part of the interim use plan for LBCRC in response to resident requests for a location within the City where youth could safely skateboard.

5. Trolley Service to Sawdust Winter Fantasy

The Transit and Community Services Department continues to offer expanded trolley service to the Sawdust Winter Fantasy event from Lot 16 (Act V) as well as from a free, peripheral parking lot in Irvine near the SR-133/I-405 interchange. The final day of the Sawdust Winter Fantasy and the expanded trolley service is Sunday, December 17. More info [here](#).

6. Local Housing Trust Fund Approved for Further Evaluation

On December 12, the City Council supported a recommendation from the Housing and Human Services Committee and directed staff to explore establishment of a Local Housing Trust Fund. A Housing Trust Fund would support efforts to develop affordable housing projects in the City.

7. Balloon Ban Ordinance to Become Effective January 1, 2024

The City Council adopted an ordinance earlier this year banning the sale of balloons and prohibiting their use on public property. The local law takes effect January 1, 2024. Administrative Analyst Erin Fabian and Senior Analyst Fauna Shrago have been working with local businesses and City staff to ensure compliance. Additional information about the City's balloon ordinance can be found on [the City's website](#).

8. Update on Annual Field Closures

Each year, the City closes its sports fields during the winter months to complete turf repairs and maintenance. The field closure schedule is as follows:

- Alta Laguna Field – Reopens December 16
- Riddle Field – November 27 – February 1
- Moulton Meadows Field – December 15 – January 13

For more information, call (949) 464-6645.

9. City Hall Mother's Room Security Door Access Control

The IT Division has implemented an advanced security door access control system for the employee Mother's Room at City Hall. The system utilizes existing employees ID badges established as a component of the City Hall door access system implemented in Fiscal Year 2022-23. This enhanced ID badge door access system provides a robust layer of security, ensuring only authorized personnel enter buildings.

10. Marine Safety Hosts Mutual Aid Training

On December 13, Marine Safety hosted a training for lifeguard agencies in Orange County. During the training, 35 Marine Safety employees represented departments from Seal Beach to San Clemente. The focus was mutual aid response for underwater search and recovery operations. The City of Laguna Beach's Marine Safety Department trains regularly with regional partners to ensure efficient response during emergencies.

11. Police Department Reports

Personnel

- Jason Ross graduated from the Golden West Police Academy and will start as a new police officer on Monday.
- Tracy Pellazar started as a new dispatcher with us this week. Tracy was previously a dispatcher with the Maui Police Department and was integral in the emergency response during the recent Lahaina fire.

Police Activity

Over the weekend, December 8 and 9, Laguna Beach PD and coastal partners Newport Beach PD, Huntington Beach PD, and Seal Beach PD, conducted a grant funded Stonegarden Operation. During these operations, a Laguna Beach officer conducted a traffic stop on the border of Newport Beach and Costa Mesa. The officer contacted the male driver, and a search of the vehicle was conducted. A loaded firearm, methamphetamine, and a large sum of US currency were located inside the vehicle. The male driver was arrested for multiple violations.

On Friday, December 8, at 7:12 p.m., police and fire personnel responded to Laguna Canyon Road and Canyon Acres for a traffic collision which required the fire department to cut and rescue patients. The inbound lanes were closed for a short period. Three patients were transported to the hospital.

On Saturday, December 9, during the afternoon, officers responded to various calls for service for a subject causing vandalism and disturbances between 1800 S. Coast Highway and 2300 S. Coast Highway. Officers were looking for the subject when a reporting party called about an intruder in a residence of the 100 block of Moss Street. The subject was identified from earlier calls in the day as a subject on probation with a history of assaulting officers. The home was emptied, a perimeter was set, additional resources were contacted, and the subject was located. The subject was arrested.

On Sunday, December 10, at 2:00 p.m., officers assembled at Main Beach for the annual Chanukah Surfboard Menorah celebration. Fifty people were in attendance.

At 3:00 p.m., a small group (10-15 individuals) of Pro-Palestinian protestors assembled at Main Beach and conducted a "sit-in." No issues were reported.

At 7:04 p.m., an officer attempted a traffic stop on a DUI subject near Aliso Beach. The vehicle continued southbound and shut off all of its lights to evade the traffic stop. The vehicle obeyed most traffic control devices and speed limits. The pursuit continued toward San Diego County until the California Highway Patrol (CHP) took over. CHP decided to conduct a PIT (pursuit intervention tactic) and the vehicle was stopped in La Jolla. CHP took the arrest of the intoxicated female.

On Monday, December 11, at 3:13 p.m., officers responded to Thurston Middle School for a pedestrian versus vehicle collision. A school crossing guard was in the crosswalk when a motorist ran over his foot, breaking his leg. He was transported to Mission Hospital, Laguna Beach. <https://abc17news.com/cnn-regional/2023/12/14/laguna-beach-community-rallies-around-crossing-guard-hospitalized-after-being-hit-by-car/>

Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) Section

- Preparing for operational transition to new HLO, Officer Zach Oblea.

Traffic Section

- Traffic Section officers are continuously gathering data from areas that have been identified as traffic-related community concerns and conducting the necessary enforcement.
- Working with the new Motor Officer to prepare for the upcoming Basic Motor Academy in January 2024.

Park Ranger Section

- Park Rangers are continuing to be a presence in the community and working with CSO Rice on educating businesses about crime prevention.
- Park Rangers transitioned to their new schedule this week. This will allow for three park rangers, seven days a week, and for longer periods to address concerns in the early evening.

Parking Services Section

- PSOs are addressing community concerns related to illegal parking of RVs in various areas of the city.

Community Services Officer (CSO) Section

- CSO Rice is working on a community education project related to residential burglaries. She will be producing a social media video.
- CSO Rice is preparing for upcoming holiday events throughout the rest of December.

Community Events

- Citizens On Patrol (COP) Holiday Appreciation breakfast
- Chief's Annual Walk Around Town

Sean Joyce
Interim City Manager