

# The Week That Was<sup>TW2</sup>

January 29 – February 2, 2024



## 1. City Council’s Policy Initiatives for 2024 Available Online

On January 19, 2024, the City Council convened for its Annual Planning Workshop in the City Council Chambers. This session featured a presentation of the City’s financial standing and future projections. The workshop also encompassed discussion of policy issues and strategies for enhancing organizational efficiency. The workshop concluded with a productive dialogue centered around the strategic vision for 2024 through the prioritization of policy initiatives. The [City Council’s revised policy initiatives for 2024](#) are available on the City’s website. A summary of the Annual Planning Workshop will be included on the February 13, 2024, on the City Council Consent Calendar agenda as a “receive and file” the report memorializing the Council’s January 19 priorities and other policy direction.

## 2. Unlocking Opportunities for Affordable Housing in Laguna Beach

The Orange County Housing Finance Trust (OCHFT) recently announced the [2024 Notice of Funding Availability](#) (NOFA), making over \$25 million accessible for eligible projects. As a member of OCHFT, the City of Laguna Beach encourages local affordable housing developers to seize this funding opportunity. The City reached out to engage with affordable housing developers, offering support throughout the application process, to enhance the chances of successful projects in Laguna Beach. Applications are due by March 15, 2024, at 5:00 pm. For detailed information and additional resources, visit the dedicated [2024 NOFA webpage](#).

## 3. Climate Action and Adaptation Plan Update: Greenhouse Gas Inventory Memo Available on City’s Website

The initial phase of preparing a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan involves evaluating the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions within the community and projecting these emissions into future years based on growth assumptions. Staff is pleased to announce that this crucial step has been successfully completed. A [summary memo outlining the GHG inventory](#) can be found on the City’s website. Staff is completing its review of the Vulnerability Assessment and the Microgrid Resiliency Study and anticipate making both reports available on the City’s website in the coming weeks. The GHG Inventory and the Vulnerability Assessment form the cornerstone upon which GHG reduction policies will be developed.

## 4. Southern California Edison Conducting Pole Replacement at Top of the World

Public Works staff has issued SCE emergency Coastal Development Permits for SCE pole replacement. The City has also extended SCE’s deadline to apply for Coastal Development Permit from February 22 (30 days from the City’s Notice of Violation date of January 22)

to March 22, 2024, because the emergent work is now not expected to be completed until mid-February; SCE will therefore need additional time to prepare documents associated with the trail grading.

SCE is immediately implementing additional (and critically important) soil and sediment erosion control measures, followed by completion of its system repairs. The latter operation is now planned to exclude the need for additional path clearance, cranes, or helicopters. SCE believes that the (mostly) manual operations will require approximately 7 days of construction work over the next two weeks, assuming clear weather and stable soil conditions.

Natural habitat monitors will be present to ensure that all work is performed without interruption to nesting gnat catchers.

Conditions of the emergency permit require SCE to obtain a Coastal Development Permit and Design Review approval for the grading and restoration work after emergency work is performed.

A traffic crew will be in place to ensure the safety of bikers and hikers during the helicopter operation.

#### **5. Vessel Aground at Victoria Beach**

On the evening of January 25, staff responded to a report of a vessel aground on the North rocks at Victoria Beach. Lifeguards searched the 30-foot boat and determined that no occupants were on board and no immediate threat to the public. Increasing surf and tides damaged the boat, resulting in a coordinated effort by Marine Safety and Public Works to remove and properly dispose of the wreckage safely. Victoria Beach was temporarily closed until Monday, January 29, when all debris was removed.

#### **6. Publication of Laguna Beach Decision**

The California Supreme Court recently denied a request to review the Court of Appeal's published Opinion in the case of *Historic Architecture Alliance v. City of Laguna Beach (Kirby)*, thereby affirming the City's victory. The case is notable because it creates new law in California and can now be cited as legal precedent. Substantively, it is important because it recognizes the City's apt use of a Class 31 categorical exemption under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Court of Appeal's Opinion cogently explains the standard, scope of review, and the burden of proof to be used by the courts when historic resources are at issue. Prior to this point, there had been no published cases dealing with the Class 31 categorical exemption. The Petitioners in this case had also requested that the Supreme Court order depublication of the Court of Appeal's Opinion, but the request was similarly denied, leaving in place this new law. The case is now complete.

#### **7. New Feature – Online Campaign Finance Statement Notifications**

The City Clerk's Office has announced a new feature on the City's website to keep residents informed with [campaign finance statements](#). With this new feature, residents can register to receive notifications when new campaign finance statements are posted. [Click here to register for campaign finance statement notifications](#).

## **8. Study Session Concerning the Scope of Services for a Comprehensive Zoning Code Update**

As previously reported, on March 26, the City Council will convene a 3:00-4:00 p.m. study session to provide staff direction to staff concerning the scope of work for a Comprehensive Zoning Code Update. This initiative stems from the City Council's commitment to complete a comprehensive review of the zoning code to clarify many elements of the City Zoning Code to eliminate inconsistencies and reduce ambiguity that can cause lingering frustration and unnecessary project review for property owners and City staff.

## **9. Police Department Continues to Work with OC District Attorney's Office to Address Quality of Life Issues**

The Police Department underwent training this week, led by Deputy District Attorney Justin Sanchez. The training aimed to equip the department with strategies to effectively address and streamline the processing of repeat offenders involved in quality-of-life-related issues.

## **10. Noteworthy Police Patrol Activity**

On Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 10:17 a.m., officers contacted a male subject who was repeatedly calling 9-1-1 unnecessarily. The male subject was advised of the improper use of 9-1-1; however, he continued. The male subject was issued a citation for the misuse of 9-1-1.

- At 7:57 p.m., Laguna Beach police and marine safety responded to Victoria Beach regarding a boat that washed ashore. The boat was not occupied at the time of the incident and was towed to Dana Point Harbor the following morning. Marine Safety is handling the follow-up investigation with the boat owner.



- On Saturday, January 26, at 12:54 a.m., a DUI was called in and the reporting party said a female was trying to exit a vehicle at each stop light. An officer soon located the vehicle traveling southbound on North Coast Highway at a high rate of speed from Boat Canyon Drive. The vehicle lost control and collided with the traffic signal at Ocean Avenue, also severing a fire hydrant. Officers arrived on the scene and attempted to remove the occupants as the vehicle caught fire. The collision caused the doors to be wedged shut, but officers were able to pry the doors open and remove the unconscious female and uncooperative male. Fire Department

personnel arrived to extinguish the fire. The driver was arrested, and the female was transported for injuries. South Coast Highway was closed while debris was cleared.



- At 2:41 p.m., officers were called to the 600 block of South Coast Hwy, concerning a civil issue regarding subjects standing outside a business on the sidewalk. The individuals were recording the business from the sidewalk. Both parties were contacted and advised of the legal issues involved.
- On Sunday, January 28, 2024, at 8:06 p.m., officers responded to the 600 block of Ramona Avenue about a domestic violence incident. Officers contacted both involved parties and further investigation revealed the male subject hit his girlfriend, who fell to the ground and fractured her arm. The male subject was placed under arrest and an Emergency Protective Order was issued for the involved female.
- On Monday, January 29, 2024, at 10:37 p.m., officers responded to El Toro and Laguna Canyon Road for a hit-and-run traffic collision involving an intoxicated male subject. Officers contacted the male driver and a DUI investigation ensued. The male driver was placed under arrest for DUI and hit-and-run.
- On Tuesday, January 30, 2024, at 9:09 a.m., officers contacted a male subject and Pacific Edge Hotel who was going through a psychological episode. Officers and staff of Be Well were able to calm the male and transported him to a mental health facility for further evaluation.
- At 11:22 a.m., officers responded to 1500 Hillcrest Drive for a male subject threatening a police Parking Service Officer. The male subject was contacted, and a citation was issued. The employee was not desirous of prosecution.
- On Wednesday, January 31, at 7:59 p.m., officers were dispatched to a subject brandishing a taser at passersby. The victims saw the electric arc as he threatened them. The subject returned to his car and later fled on foot into Moulton Meadows Park. While officers looked for the suspect, they discovered he had also threatened to burn other victim's homes down.

- Officers towed the subject's car and located a gas can and lighters inside the vehicle. At 12:36 a.m., the subject was heard yelling in the area of 700 Summit Way. Officers located and contacted the subject, placing him under arrest for felony threats, brandishing a weapon and delaying/ threatening officers.

***Neighborhood Enhancement Team (NET)***

*Homeless Liaison Officer (HLO) Section*

- Completed the Laguna Beach portion of the county-wide Point in Time homeless count last week.
- Working with the OCDA on repeat offender enforcement.

*Traffic Section*

- The new Motor Officer will graduate from Basic Motor School on Friday.

*Park Ranger Section*

- Park Rangers assisted the county with the Point-in-Time homeless count last week.
- Our new Park Ranger starts on Monday.

*Parking Services Section*

- The new Parking Service Officer/ Accident Investigator (PSO/AI) will begin on Monday.
- The PSO/AI has completed basic accident investigation training and is completing non-injury and cold case hit-and-run collision investigations.

*Community Services Officer (CSO) Section:*

- The CSO is working with detectives to create a communication portal for businesses in the city affected by recent commercial burglaries to relay specific information to assist with the prevention of future incidents.
- The CSO is assisting with the Citizen's Academy class.

*Sean Joyce*  
Interim City Manager