

REVITALIZATION

Hotels stalled as supes reject leases

Dana Point Harbor development could lack financing without board agreement, pivot to renovation instead

By Erika I. Ritchie
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The fate of a boutique-style hotel and surf lodge proposed as part of the \$700 million Dana Point Harbor revitalization remains uncertain after the OC Board of Supervisors again couldn't agree on two new 66-year land leases that developers want to help secure financing. "Disappointment is an understatement here," Bob Olson said Tuesday, following the supervisors' meeting.

Olson is one of three Dana Point Harbor Partners and heads up R.D. Olson, the company that has been working for

years to secure permits and develop plans for the new hotels intended to be a crowning jewel of the harbor revitalization. The two other partners from whom he wanted to separate the ground lease are Joe Ueberroth of Bellwether Financial Group, who is leading the marina reconstruction, and Bryon Ward of Burnham-Ward Properties, who is constructing the commercial core. Both of those components are well underway.

"It's sad to see the board turn down such an incredible investment and opportunity for Dana Point Harbor and Orange County," Olson said. "Without the lease bifurcation, we are

forced to remodel the existing hotel."

Fifth District Supervisor Katrina Foley encouraged her colleagues to move forward on Tuesday with the bifurcation of the leases so the developers could secure financing and keep moving forward with building the two hotels. She didn't want the supervisors to even entertain a renovation of the existing Marina Inn at this point, saying, "If the remodel path is chosen, we may never get two new hotels."

But at least four of the five supervisors had to agree, and



A rendering shows hotels proposed to be built near Dana Point Harbor as part of the area's revitalization. The two new hotels, Dana House and Surf Lodge, would replace the Marina Inn. R.D. Olson has been seeking lease separations from the OC Board of Supervisors to start the project. COURTESY OF BOB OLSON

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FULLERTON SCHOOL DISTRICT



Second grade student Emma Cano gets breakfast from teacher Sarai Lucero at Pacific Drive Elementary School in Fullerton on Friday. All students receive a free breakfast through Breakfast in the Classroom. PHOTOS BY PAUL BERSEBACH — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Breakfast in Classroom expands to another campus

Children's nutrition initiative begins serving meals at Pacific Drive Elementary

By Charlie Borla
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Students at Pacific Drive Elementary School receive a little extra when they come to class this year: a free breakfast.

Every one of the more than 600 students at the Fullerton school can choose entrees — such as baked goods or bacon, egg and cheese breakfast pockets — served with a side of fruit. Students can eat their breakfast while teachers take attendance or share morning announcements, the Fullerton School District says.

Pacific Drive is now the third campus in the district's Breakfast in Classroom initiative. The first meals were served Aug. 17, one week after classes started this school year.

The initiative began in Commonwealth Elementary during the 2023-24 school year. Reichman Elementary began getting free breakfast the next year.

Breakfast in the Classroom is part of the district's nutrition services department's "broader effort to reimagine school meals



Students eat breakfast at Pacific Drive Elementary School in Fullerton on Friday.

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ORANGE COUNTY

Board sets sights on dealings with Do

Companies in audit not showing documents on questionable spending

By Claire Wang
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The OC Board of Supervisors wants to know what legal means Orange County has for getting financial records from companies that are not producing records of how taxpayer funding was used.

The supervisors were updated on Tuesday on the latest phase of independent audits underway by accounting firm Weaver and Tidwell of contracts with links to former First District Supervisor Andrew Do.



Supervisor Janet Nguyen expressed frustration that businesses are still not providing receipts and other documents to show whether they delivered the services they were contracted to provide.

"There are so many gaps on here that we don't have answers to," she said. "This audit cannot become just another report that identifies missing documentation, questionable decisions and unverified payments only to have those findings disappear (without) a corrective action."

The Aug. 12 audit report, which reviewed 681 high-priority contracts totaling \$1.7 billion, was the second part of four audits ordered by the county into contracts from January 2019 to August 2025, starting with those Do had a hand in authorizing.

Do is serving a five-year federal prison sentence after pleading guilty in October 2024 to accepting \$550,000 in bribes to steer more than \$10 million in COVID-relief funds to two nonprofits.

In all, auditors are expected to look at \$4.3 billion worth of contracts issued by the County Executive Office, Health Care Agency, OC Community Resources and Social Services Agency.

Looking ahead to the next phases of the audit, Nguyen asked County Counsel Leon Page to clarify whether the board has the subpoena power itself, or the author-

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SAN CLEMENTE

Father of 5 paralyzed in rescue attempt

He went to the aid of child struggling in surf, struck his head on ocean floor

By Laylan Connelly
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It was the end-of-summer beach day in south San Clemente, a chance to enjoy the sand and surf before school got back in session.

But the life-changing day turned in an instant as an 8-year-old struggled in the surf at Riviera Beach, family friend Josh Collette quickly jumping in to help.

A rip current had shifted the sand and filled in an area that just minutes earlier was deep. As Collette dove into the water to rescue the boy, he said his head hit the ocean floor, breaking his neck and damaging his spinal cord.

Collette, a San Clemente father of five children spanning ages 9 to 18, is now facing an uncertain future — a severe, high-level spinal cord injury that has left him paralyzed and in the hospital as doctors try and determine if he will be able to move his body again, family said.

From his hospital bed, Collette, 42, mouthed words that his wife Rose interpreted for a video shared on social media.

"I need to update everyone, and tell everyone thank you. This is hard. It's bearable because I'm held up by your love," he whispered, his wife translating. "Things always work out for me. I don't know how, I'm sure things will be so different."

He only loses the "dumb things like money, surfing and hobbies," he said. But keeps the important things: his family and kids.

"And my heart is full of love while I was trying to help someone else," he said.



Josh Collette, a father of five, is now facing an uncertain future — a high-level spinal cord injury has left him paralyzed. COURTESY OF THE COLLETTE FAMILY

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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Metrolink adds late-night trains for Daisy Chain music festival

Three special post-event trains will be provided

City News Service

Metrolink will provide special late-night train service Saturday for people attending Olivia Rodrigo's inaugural Daisy Chain Fields Music Festival at Great Park in Irvine, the regional rail

agency announced Tuesday. The festival is expected to draw attendees from across Southern California, and Metrolink will operate three special post-event trains serving destinations in Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange and northern San Diego counties, according to the agency. The special trains are: ■ Train 698 from Anaheim to Oceanside, departing at

11:30 p.m.; ■ Train 699 from Irvine to Los Angeles Union Station, departing at 11:40 p.m.; and ■ Train 898 from Irvine to San Bernardino-Downtown, departing at 11:30 p.m. Metrolink said the added service is intended to give festivalgoers an alternative to driving because parking at Great Park is limited. Attendees can take regularly scheduled Metrolink

service to Anaheim Station and purchase a shuttle pass through festival producer C3 Presents, or travel to Irvine Station and use a rideshare service to reach Great Park, officials said. "A major event like Daisy Chain Fields brings people from throughout Southern California together to enjoy talented musical acts while supporting organizations that advance opportu-

nities for women and girls," said Metrolink Board Chair Doug Chaffee. "Through this partnership, we are offering attendees a safe, convenient and affordable alternative to driving, while demonstrating the benefits of passenger rail in this region." The special trains will operate at regular Metrolink fares. The \$10 SoCal Day Pass provides unlimited system-wide travel on weekends, and

up to three children 17 and younger can ride free with each paying adult, according to Metrolink. Organizers said 100% of net proceeds from the inaugural Daisy Chain Fields festival will benefit 10 nonprofit organizations supporting women and girls. More information about the special service is available at metrolinktrains.com/daisy-chain-fields.

BREAKFAST

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through student and family taste tests, expanded scratch cooking and locally sourced ingredients," the district said. Fullerton School District has also offered a traveling barbecue to campuses; new menu items this year include chili dogs and quesabirria. Last school year, 1.9 million breakfasts, lunches, dinners and snacks were served across the district, along with more than 50,000 meals over this summer, all of which were free of charge. "Programs like Breakfast in the Classroom are possible because of the care and commitment of our Nutrition Services staff," said Superintendent Gretchen Janson. "Every day, they help make sure our students are nourished, supported and ready to learn, and I'm incredibly grateful for the pride and heart they bring to serving our students."

The school district said it received more than \$52,000 in grant funding from No Kid Hungry to serve breakfast across the three campuses. Share Our Strength, a nonprofit organization aimed at ending childhood hunger across the country, launched the campaign in 2010. No Kid Hungry grants sent to school districts help operate meal programs, including free breakfasts. The campaign said it awarded grants to 322 school districts and organizations across the country, totaling over \$14.3 million. Samueli Academy in Santa Ana, Community Action Partnership of Orange County and the Aspire Titan Academy in Huntington Park have all received grants this year, among several others, according to No Kid Hungry. Through its various endeavors, Share Our Strength said it has provided 2.5 billion meals to kids and has doled out \$150 million in grants across the country since March 2020.



Second-grade teacher Sarai Lucero takes attendance as students eat breakfast at Pacific Drive Elementary School in Fullerton on Friday. **PAUL BERSEBACH — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER**

HOTELS

From Page 3

only Foley and Second District Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento voted in favor of signing the new land agreements. Fourth District Supervisor Doug Chaffee and Third District Supervisor Don Wagner were opposed and First District Supervisor Janet Nguyen abstained from the vote. "We have to have protection for workers, that's a simple thing," Chaffee said of the employees of the inn and other displaced harbor businesses. "I'm not willing to move forward on these other items until that's been cured." Though he voted in favor, Sarmiento said he was still interested in getting protections included for the workers and having more social justice programs included,

such as field trips for inner-city students to experience the harbor and ocean. Olson is already required to contribute to such programs in exchange for the approvals the hotel projects received from the California Coastal Commission. "I hope we can go beyond the minimum required and go to a more robust program," he added. "My real goal is to make sure there is continuing work for those who made the Dana Point environment a positive one," Sarmiento added. "To the extent this is reintroduced, I don't want us to forget about the discussions we're having today." Supervisors had already discussed the new land leases, which would restart the clock and give the developer group Dana Point Harbor Partners 66 years going forward, at their last

two meetings, saying they needed more time and had questions about the proposed revisions. The county first tapped Dana Point Harbor Partners for a public-private partnership in 2018 — with a 60-year lease — to undertake the massive overhaul of the aging harbor. Without the new land leases, Olson has said it would be difficult to get financing for the hotels and renovating the aging Marina Inn would be the alternative. At the supervisors' June meeting, Foley suggested several last-minute additions to the land leases, including provisions for hotel employees and limits on rent increases for marina slips. Olson said the additions would make the projects impossible to move forward. He has said he has stopped all planning for the hotels since

that meeting. The delays at that point, the developers have said, also eliminated any possibility of having the new hotels ready for the LA 2028 Olympics, which is holding the surfing competition at nearby Lower Trestles, south of San Clemente. At the supervisors' meeting earlier this month, Foley said she was ready to approve the land leases without her suggested additions and pushed for an agreement to keep progress moving forward, but several of her colleagues, including Wagner and Sarmiento, raised their own concerns about how the displacement of employees at the Marina Inn and at the soon-to-be shuttered Wind & Sea restaurant would be handled. Wagner also noted his concern with a request in the lease agreements that

the county be guaranteed free access to meeting space and public venues up to six times a year. Olson said on Tuesday that he is not sure of next steps now that the supervisors have again not approved the land leases Dana Point Harbor Partners have negotiated with the county's real estate department. Olson said he will wait to talk with the county's chief real estate officer, Mat Miller. He said the two new hotels could provide 200 new jobs and \$12 million in ground

rent to the county over the first 10 years and more than \$50 million over the term of the new proposed leases. The hotels would be a much bigger source of revenue for the county and the city of Dana Point than a renovation of the Marina Inn, he said. "They keep pushing this out, and I think not understanding the positive financial impact to our communities," he said. "There is less direction today than at the first or second hearing."

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COLLETTE

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Collette grew up in Northern California, surfing Santa Cruz and on his school's swim team through his younger years. He and his wife, Rose, brought their family of five to San Clemente three years ago, with Collette running a solar supply company and the sole provider for the family. After hitting the sandbar, the mother of the boy Collette was trying to help was next to Collette and immediately noticed something was wrong as Collette floated on the ocean's surface, family said. She called for help and pulled him out of the water. He was conscious and could mouth words to his wife, telling her he couldn't move and was having trouble breathing. "I need you to be my breath for me," he told her, his wife administering CPR until lifeguards arrived. Collette, in the video, recounted how the ocean conditions quickly changed. "This is on me, it was my



Josh Collette, a San Clemente father of five kids, is now facing an uncertain future after a high-level spinal cord injury left him paralyzed. **COURTESY OF THE COLLETTE FAMILY**

choice. The sand moved, I was just in the water and it was deep. And I needed to act quickly so I jumped in and I should not have," he said. Family, friends and church supporters have been helping with food and transporting the kids to their first days of school this week.

A fundraising effort on GoFundMe is underway as the family faces mounting medical costs. Collette called the San Clemente community special, thanking everyone for their support. "I'm a fighter and I'll do everything I can if I can stay alive, keep my kids and my

faith," he said. "Then this will be a blessing." He added one request: "And a Slurpee would be nice," finding the strength to smile. "I know there's so much happening I can't see, but I can feel it," he said. "I feel the love, thank you."

should expect." Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento said the board should continue exploring remedies or civil action aimed at "making the county whole." He added that he would like to better understand the extent of the board's subpoena and investigatory powers so that it can demand more answers from vendors. "The District 1 office was the epicenter, but this (scheme) had relationships to others beyond the office, and that's my concern," Sarmiento said. "We need to ask: Who did or was aware because knowledge here is also acquiescence?"

AUDIT

From Page 3

ity to give the auditors such power, to demand receipts, bank statements and other records from businesses that had contracts with the county. Nguyen also asked Page to explore taking legal action against businesses that refuse to produce the documents. Nguyen highlighted several deals reviewed by auditors that she felt warranted more scrutiny, including a \$500,000 contract the county awarded Bridgecreek Realty Investment Co., founded by prom-

inent Little Saigon developer Frank Jao, to provide outdoor dining in Little Saigon during the pandemic. The company did not provide receipts showing how more than half the money had been spent, auditors said. She also noted Mercy Pharmacy, which invoiced the county \$748,720 for providing COVID-19 vaccinations in 2021. The OC Health Care Agency paid for the vaccinations without the required supporting documentation, the audit reported. "We can't even identify who these individual patients are who got these vaccinations?" Nguyen asked.

Representatives with Bridgecreek and Mercy Pharmacy could not be reached Tuesday afternoon for comment. Supervisor Katrina Foley said a positive takeaway from the audit is that the corruption seems to have been contained to Do's office, rather than spread across county departments. She reiterated Nguyen's call for the recovery of improperly used funds. "We need to get reimbursed in full for any expenditures by the county to a vendor where they cannot prove that they used the money as expected," Foley said. "That's the least we