

City Manager Leadership Award goes to the Finance Department's Matt Schmelzel

City Manager Tom Hatch presented the March City Manager Leadership Award to the Finance Department's Treasury Specialist Mathew Schmelzel at the monthly Meet and Greet event on Thursday March 22.

"Matt is a great contributor to the Finance Department team," City Manager Hatch said. "He is respected by his peers and has a can-do attitude. I truly appreciate his dedication to his work and the city."

Schmelzel was promoted to treasury specialist in December of 2016 and that alone is a big job. Some of his primary job functions are to review financial records and related revenue collections for compliance with the City's Municipal Code including: Transient Occupancy Tax, various rent payments and business licensing. He also issues nonprofit solicitation permits, and bingo permits. In the absence of the revenue supervisor he is responsible for daily banking and cash management functions as well as training and supporting staff.

But soon after assuming that role the revenue supervisor and the accounting specialist left the City leaving a huge vacancy in the Treasury Division. Schmelzel stepped up to take on some of the Revenue Supervisor's job responsibilities such as daily cash management, special event permits, and fireworks permits.

In addition to learning his new role as the treasury specialist, Schmelzel was training a new employee on issuing business and animal license permits and managing Treasury staff. Plus, Schmelzel was on a committee for the selection of a new online animal licensing system.

Schmelzel has continued to coordinate the City's special event permitting process, which requires collaboration with City departments and outside parties to ensure compliance with the City's Special Events Permit Ordinance. In addition to issuing over 50 permits in 2017, some of the larger special event projects he has worked on include the OC Marathon and the Chargers Training Camp.

Schmelzel joined the city in March of 2014 as a part time permit processing specialist. He has Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration from Cal State Fullerton with a concentration in finance.

In addition to Schmelzel, City Manager Hatch welcomed several new and newly promoted employees. The new hires included:

Flor Paniagua, Jade Sims and Andre "A.J" Wallace, all recreation leader IIs in the Parks & Community Services Department, and Police Officers James C. Hagan and Tyler Salem. In the Public Services Department, Hatch welcomed Azita Fakoorbayat a new principal civil engineer, Bobby Fouladi, a new associate engineer and Nazila Mokarram a senior engineer.

The newly promoted employees include Code Enforcement Officer Andy Godinez, Rene Jimenez and Elena Martinez to recreation leader IV and Jessica Martinez to recreation specialist.

New library construction meeting milestones

The Lions Park Projects construction continues and scheduled milestones are being met.

The steel reinforced concrete foundations, and infrastructure for water, sewer, gas and power utilities for the new library have been surveyed and constructed.



The structural steel frame system for the building has been erected, welded, bolted, inspected, and secured in place. The framework for the large, oval shaped sky light above the future staircase is taking form. The aesthetic arches of the building's exterior are now visible.

On March 7, the concrete for the library's first floor was constructed, including all utility penetrations, elevator pit and connections to its adjacent vertical components. On March 19, the concrete for the second floor of the building was placed. Underground storm drain construction is also underway for the new, one-acre park.

Bristol Street Project Achieves Another New Milestone

Improvements on the Bristol Street Project has achieved a new milestone. Striping of the newly paved section of Bristol Street between Baker Street and Randolph was completed and all median curbs have been installed.

A traffic signal was installed at the intersection of Bristol Street and Sobeca Way, at the CAMP and Pep Boys driveways.

This newly installed signal will allow for controlled crossing of pedestrians between the east and west sides of Bristol Street and improve traffic operations. Traffic engineers will be monitoring this location and adjusting the signal timing as needed to coordinate with other traffic signals in the vicinity.

Landscaping and irrigation improvements will be completed over the next four weeks.

Sandbags available at City Hall for residents only

As a fierce spring storm approaches and is expected to hit Costa Mesa and Orange County beginning early Thursday March 22, the City of Costa Mesa will provide residents with free sand and sand bags in the southeast corner of the City Hall parking lot at 77 Fair Drive.

The National Weather Service predicts the storm could bring as much as 1 to 2 inches of rain to coastal and inland Orange County areas.

Maintenance Services staff will also be patrolling potential flooding spots to make sure catch basins are clear of debris and operational and standing by to respond to other weather-related incidents.

Sand and sand bags are also available at Fire Station No. 4, located at 2300 Placentia Avenue.

Both city hall and the fire station are self-service location with shovels available for use, and the number of sandbags is limited to 15 sandbags per household.

No commercial use please.

For more information on sandbags [click here](#).

City launches new Community Improvement webpage detailing all code enforcement activities, including group home information

The City's Community Improvement Division has created a new web page that will provide visitors with a host of information regarding various categories of code enforcement activities.

[Click here](#) to view that page.

Visitors to the page can get lists of the code enforcement activities throughout the City such as building code violations, property maintenance violations, inoperable vehicles, and group home complaints. [Click here.](#)

For example, for group homes, the webpage provides information regarding group homes that have received conditional use permits to operate, state licensed facilities, pending group home applications, homes that have been issued citations, closed locations and homes currently under review. [Click here.](#)

The page also has links to information related to medical marijuana uses permitted by Measure X and garage sales.

The page also has contact information, phone numbers and links to file nuisance complaints.

Residents and web page visitors can call a duty officer/main hotline at (714) 754-5638 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday or use the City's Costa Mesa Connect service [here.](#)

For state licensed homes, residents can [click here](#) to file a complaint with the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS).

Library Foundation members donate \$26,000 to city's Lions Park Projects

Members of the Costa Mesa Library Foundation Committee presented Mayor Sandy Genis and the City Council with three checks totaling \$26,000 that will help fund essential equipment that will enhance the experience of children, teens,

and adults visiting the new Donald Dungan Library that is currently under construction.

Longtime library advocates and members of the Friends of the Library Barbara Steck, Charlene Ashendorf and Mary Ellen Goddard presented three checks, which include, \$6,000 for the Children's Library Early Childhood play and Learning Island, \$15,000 for the Teen Library Technology Bar and \$5,000 for the Interactive Media Display.

"Thank you for investing in our community and most importantly thank you for your strong support," Mayor Sandy Genis said. "We truly value your partnership."

The city is currently in the process of constructing the Lions Park Projects, a \$36.5 million public works effort that will include a new 20,000-square-foot Donald Dungan Library as well as the refurbishment of the existing library into a new Neighborhood Community Center and many park improvements.

The library is scheduled for completion in spring of 2020. For more information about the projects [click here](#).

Public Services launches new website to keep residents updated on Capital Improvement Projects

Public Services is working closely with the Communications and Marketing team to share updates on the city's major Capital Improvement Projects.

A few of the City's large projects include the Bristol Street Improvements Project, the Lions Park Projects, the Arlington Drive Improvements Project, and the Fire Station No. 1 Reconstruction.

As part of this collaboration, there is a new webpage available at www.costamesaca.gov/CIP that features some new project fact sheets.

Visit this webpage for frequent updates.

Assistant City Manager Tammy Letourneau writes the book, the only book, on staff report writing

In every local government organization, staff members write staff reports to present important information and inform the legislative body.

These staff reports can cover any number of topics, from purchasing playground equipment to development projects.

Costa Mesa Assistant City Manager Tamara Letourneau has worked in city government for 29 years and for the last 17 years, she has taught university level courses in city management.

During that time as a college instructor, she learned that no resource existed to teach students and employees how to write a staff report.

"So I wrote one myself," she said. "There is no other resource

like it.”

The result is “Mastering the Art: A Step-by-Step Guide to Writing a Quality Staff Report for Local Government,” which is billed as a resource guide for local government professionals.

[Click here](#) to order the book on Amazon.

According to the book summary, this guide simplifies the process and can serve as a reference manual that all government professionals keep on-hand throughout their careers.

Letourneau added several personal touches, including a forward from her mentor and the first city manager she worked for Jim Starbird, who is now retired.

Each chapter of the book is a guide to write each section in the staff report, including Tammy’s Tips at the end of each chapter.

With storms approaching, city prepares sandbags for residents in case of flooding

With inclement weather expected beginning this event March 1 through Saturday March 3, the City of Costa Mesa will provide residents with sand and sand bags at Fire Station No. 4, located at 2300 Placentia Avenue.

It is a self-service location, with shovels available for use, and the number of sandbags is limited to 15 sandbags per household. No commercial use please.

Maintenance Services staff will also be patrolling potential flooding spots to make sure catch basins are clear of debris and operational.

For more information on sandbags [click here](#).

A day of gratitude and giving thanks

It was Thanksgiving Day 2015.

Katlyn Soltys crawled her way out of the Santa Ana riverbed, where she had been living near the corner of Hamilton Avenue and Brookhurst Street, and into Costa Mesa's Lighthouse Church of the Nazarene.

She was approaching her 26th birthday and had already racked up 14 brutal years of addiction to alcohol, heroin, crack and meth. A Michigan native, she had let drugs destroy her relationship with her family.

But it was on this day of gratitude and giving thanks that she realized she needed to end the cycle of destruction.

So a friend took her to the Lighthouse for breakfast where she met church staff members Tim Brown and Ronnie Steen. She instantly felt love at the church. She thought that this is where she needed to be to get her life back

"It was the kindness I felt from everyone," she said. "It had been a real long time since anyone had been that nice to me."

But Brown and Steen had bad news for her. They told her the Lighthouse was a men's only facility. She left the church dejected and sad but after wandering the streets of Costa

Mesa, she returned later that day with this message for the church staff.

"I looked at Tim and said, 'I'm going to die if you don't let me live here,'" Soltys said.

So the two Lighthouse workers prayed about it and decided to let her stay. They set up a little cot in their sanctuary kitchen area where Soltys stayed and did whatever work they wanted her to do. She cooked and attended their meetings.

"I'm just thankful that during this time in my life their doors were open for me," she said. "I felt like I was a person to them. Even though I was a woman in a men's facility I felt just as equal. My heart felt full."

For Lighthouse Church Pastor Phil Eyskens, who works daily with the city's Network for Homeless Solutions, Soltys is just one of many his ministry touches on a regular basis.

"When I was first assigned as pastor of the Lighthouse over seven years ago, I soon came to the conclusion that this unique church was more than just a church, but it was also a mission," said Pastor Phil Eyskens. "Katlyn's story is one of the many success stories we have realized here at the Lighthouse, as we strive to offer a hand-up approach in this rubber-meets-the-road ministry. Go Katlyn, go!"

Through Soltys' connection at the Lighthouse, she met another church worker, Lindah Miles, who helped her get into a sober living facility in Palm Springs. That ended up being a life-changing and lifesaving moment and Soltys has never looked back.

After spending 90 days in the Palm Springs rehab facility, Soltys moved into another one in Garden Grove called Gabe's Home, named after the son of Pastor Joe Furey of His Place Church in Westminster who died of a heroin overdose. She now lives in a Huntington Beach apartment with her fiancé, who

also got clean after years of addiction.

Soltys ended up in California at the age of 23 after her mom kicked her out of their Michigan home and sent her to a rehab facility in Temecula that she eventually also got kicked out of.

She spent three years bouncing in and out of rehab homes and living in Oceanside, San Diego and Costa Mesa before giving up drugs for good on that Thanksgiving Day in 2015. But for someone who had spent more than a decade hooked on alcohol and drugs, the pathway to sober living and a life off of the streets was more difficult than imagined.

“I was kind of shell shocked,” she said. “The readjustment of coming back and having a roof over my head was really uncomfortable. I didn’t know what to do. You don’t get that many success stories from homelessness. What is life after homelessness? I felt that overwhelming feeling.”

Then she got busy. She got a sponsor through Alcoholics Anonymous. She got a job at a law firm in Irvine and would take the bus every morning to work at 5 a.m. She said even though it was long hours, the job gave her a safe place to be every day and she was grateful to have the opportunity.

She worked there a year and a half and then her life changed again. Her son Levi was born.

“I look at Levi now and I think how could I ever see a life without him,” she said. “I love my family and I realize how much love my family has for me and I couldn’t imagine ever going back.”

Indeed, after years of emotional trauma, after years of distrust and anger, she has mended fences with her family and now speaks to her mother every day and says her mom is her best friend. She credits that to her sobriety and how former addicts look back at the damage they have done and instead

become what she called "other-centered."

"I can't imagine what I put my family through," she said. "If I have a bad day and I ever think about getting high, I think about my family and I wouldn't want to put them through that again."

Today, Soltys feels the drive to help others who are in the shoes she once was in. She says the best part of her sobriety is that she can be a sponsor in AA. She helps women go through the 12 steps. She hopes that someday the Lighthouse Church will have a place for women to seek help from addiction and she also hopes someday to make a career out of helping others.

"It helps me to help them," she said. "They are helping me more than I'm helping them and they don't even know that. I've done a lot of fun things in sobriety."

Things continue to look brighter and brighter for her. After eight years without a driver's license she got hers reinstated this past February, and the next day her fiance's boss gave her a car.

She attributes all of this to a higher power.

"My story is much related to God," she said. "I didn't plan to stop using that day. I didn't plan to leave the riverbed that day. I really enjoyed being homeless. I really enjoyed using drugs. I'm telling you it was God."

Maintenance Tech Brendan Carpenter honored with City Manager Leadership Award

City Manager Tom Hatch presented Senior Maintenance Technician Brendan Carpenter with the City Manager Leadership Award at the monthly employee Meet and Greet on Thursday Feb. 22.

“I appreciate Brendan for his hard work and being a great contributor to the city team,” City Manager Hatch said. “He is efficient, has a can-do attitude and always keeps the best interest of Costa Mesa residents his first priority.”

Carpenter has provided five years of professional and dedicated service to the City of Costa Mesa, starting in 2013 as a part-time General Aide. He was hired full-time in 2015 as a Maintenance Worker, and was promoted to Senior Maintenance Technician in 2016.

With the recent departure of the Maintenance Supervisor in the Streets and Traffic Section, the street maintenance staff has had to step up to assist with daily operations to ensure the high level of service that is expected proceeds uninterrupted.

Carpenter has taken on the responsibility of managing the daily work of the city’s sign shop and processing work orders generated by the Transportation Services section. He eagerly accepted the challenge while continuing to fulfill his daily duties manufacturing and replacing signs.

He is managing projects and overseeing the in-house roadway painting program. Some of his recent accomplishments include the replacement of the old-style coyote warning signs with the City’s new updated signs, the Pacific Avenue improvements where the street dead ends at Fairview Park and setting up the field crews that recently completed the installations of the

bike sharrows on East 19th Street.

In addition to honoring Carpenter, City Manager Hatch welcomed five new employees and congratulated three others for recent promotions.

The new hires include Fanni Acosta, a new Human Resources Analyst, Waqas Khan a new Plan Checker in Development Services, Franklin Rodriguez a new Recreation Leader II in Parks and Community Services, Martha Robbins a new Police Department Crime Analyst in Public Services, Fady Ashamalla a new Engineering Technician III.

Hatch also honored Ruben Salas and Juan Santos, who were both promoted to Maintenance Supervisors and Janet Zuazo, who was promoted to Recreation Leader IV.

Mayor Genis honors business leader Janet Krochman with Mayor's Award

Costa Mesa Mayor Sandy Genis presented longtime local business leader Janet Krochman with the Mayor's Award at the Feb. 20 City Council meeting.

"Janet has been actively volunteering in Costa Mesa for years, initially getting involved while supporting her son's activities at school, Boy Scouts and youth sports," Mayor Genis said. "Janet's long list of community involvement includes working with veteran's groups, non-profit organizations and most recently assisting local businesses mitigate the impact of homeless on their businesses."

Krochman said she was very touched when she learned she was going to be presented with this award.

“Thank you all very much,” she said. “Hopefully I will have another 40 years in the city and continue to do good things.”