

City notches another sober living victory to collect court costs in Yellowstone case

Costa Mesa continues to collect victories in the landmark Yellowstone case as a Federal Court granted the city's application to recover \$61,488 in costs from plaintiffs for the trial that concluded in December of 2018.

In that case, a jury unanimously rejected claims by the Yellowstone Women's First Step House, Inc., California Women's Recovery, Inc. and the Sober Living Network, that the city's ordinances are discriminatory and violate the Fair Housing Act.

"We are grateful for the judge's decision to award cost recovery to our city taxpayers," Mayor Katrina Foley said. "It's unfortunate that the law does not currently allow recovery of attorneys fees too in these cases. Legislative reform is needed to deter these expensive lawsuits. Regardless, we will reinvest those funds in continued efforts to enforce our laws, protect our neighborhoods and patients from unscrupulous sober living operators, and prevail in court so other communities can enact similar laws."

Since the initial ruling last December, Costa Mesa has won a string of court victories that reinforced the court's ruling, and last year, Federal Judge James Selna denied motions by the plaintiffs to set aside the jury's ruling.

The City's laws, which were amended and strengthened in 2017, regulate sober living home operators in single family neighborhoods, limiting the number of residents to six or fewer and maintaining a 650-foot buffer between non-licensed

sober living homes.

The laws also regulate sober living home operators in multi-family zones, requiring a separation requirement to prevent neighborhoods from being converted into institution-like settings.

The City of Costa Mesa was represented by lead trial attorney Jennifer Keller of Keller/Anderle LLP in this victory.

The City implemented the laws to protect the entire community from operators of unlicensed facilities, which exposed residents to dangerous conditions and created public nuisance concerns that affect the City's quality of life. By doing this, Costa Mesa has led the way to hold these operators accountable, setting the precedent for other cities to do the same.

Tracy Habiger presented with the City Manager Leadership Award for January

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison presented Recreation Coordinator Tracy Habiger with the January City Manager Leadership Award at the monthly Meet and Greet on Thursday Jan. 23.

"When her team found out she was selected as this month's City Manager Leadership Award recipient, they were not surprised,"

Farrell Harrison said. "Tracy is one of the leaders in the department, and a role model for many of her peers. Her work ethic, dedication, and commitment to excellence are what make her such a great colleague."

When the Parks & Community Services Department became responsible for animal services in 2017, Habiger paved the way to establish procedures within the department and developed a strong rapport with contractors to create the new Animal Services Division.

Her efforts in the transition were instrumental to develop and foster a positive working relationship with both the Animal Shelter Operator, Newport Center Animal Hospital, and the Adoption Center: The Orphanage (Priceless Pets Rescue).

Additionally, Habiger is the staff liaison for the Animal Services Committee. The committee, under her direct oversight and leadership, has accomplished nearly all of its goals in less than 18 months of existence, which is a remarkable effort given the novelty of the overall division in the City of Costa Mesa.

Recently, she helped fill a new vacancy at the Balearic Community Center, which houses all of the City's youth programs and took on the additional responsibility of supervising a program that's responsible for more than 1,200 school-aged children.

Her skillset and success at managing multiple projects simultaneously has been evident in her ability to take on new challenges and successfully ensure smooth program operations without any drop in the level of service, despite a significant increase in her volume of work and overall responsibility.

Habiger arrived at Costa Mesa in 2006 as a Recreation Leader II and was quickly promoted to a Recreation Leader IV, then to Recreation Specialist and finally as Recreation Coordinator in

2015.

In addition to honoring Habiger, Farrell Harrison recognized several new City employees and newly promoted employees.

She introduced Susan Price, the new Assistant City Manager, Irene Rosendale is the new Permit Processing Specialist working in the Development Services Department and

Cinthia Contreras and Giselle Gayosso the two new Community Services Leader II working in the ROCKS program.

She congratulated Stacy Bennett who was recently promoted to Deputy City Clerk and

Victoria Castillo who has been promoted to Sr. Community Services Leader assigned to the ROCKS program.

Costa Mesa City Council Approves Preliminary Vision for Fairview Developmental Center

On Tuesday Jan. 21, the Costa Mesa City Council approved a high-level, housing-focused plan that outlines the City Council's recommended uses for the future development of the state-owned Fairview Developmental Center that is slated to close by June 30, 2020.

The Center's remaining clients are transitioning out by the

end of January, and a comprehensive infrastructure and site assessment is currently underway by the state and should be complete in late 2020.

“While Fairview Developmental Center is a state-owned facility, we have long believed that whatever happens to the property in the future should be developed with the best interests of Costa Mesa and its residents in mind,” Mayor Katrina Foley said. “We hope to work with the state to create a housing plan that integrates into the overall community, ends veteran homelessness in Orange County, and generates mixed income, workforce housing as well as affordable home ownership opportunities.”

The initial “Costa Mesa Solution” will be presented to the Governor’s Office, the State Department of General Services, state legislators and stakeholder groups and will outline a three-pronged approach for the site that includes veterans housing, permanent supportive housing with wrap-around services and housing that serves all income levels.

At the local level, the draft Costa Mesa Solution incorporates the themes of Community Integration and Economic Sustainability for the property, envisioning a neighborhood with trip-capturing amenities and innovative housing opportunities for veterans, those in need of permanent supportive services, young families, youth and seniors.

At the County level, the draft Costa Mesa Solution provides the resources to end veteran homelessness in Orange County and combines with the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter to provide system flow for shelter and permanent supportive housing to address the City’s share of regional housing and homeless services goals.

Finally, at the State level, the draft Costa Mesa Solution addresses the goals of the Governor and Legislature to provide additional housing at all income levels with a focus on the

workforce, to increase permanent supportive housing, and to proactively address homelessness.

The City Council looks forward to continuing its proactive work regarding the future disposition of the Fairview Developmental Center site, engaging actively with the Governor's Office and Department of General Services and the Costa Mesa community as the site reuse conversation evolves.

Young entrepreneurs receive Mayor's Award for their recycling business

On Tuesday Jan. 21, Costa Mesa Mayor Katrina Foley presented the Mayor's Award to two young entrepreneurs, siblings Zoe and Zac, who are using their recycling business to contribute to local charities.

"Tonight I am proud to present the Mayor's Award to two young members of our community who demonstrate that a combination of entrepreneurial spirit with environmental consciousness can truly start at any age," Mayor Foley said. "Thank you Zac and Zoe for making a difference here in Costa Mesa."

A few years ago, with the help of their family, eight year-old Zoe and her six year-old brother Zac started their own recycling collection business called Z & Z Recycling, Inc.

Over the years their collection efforts have grown, and their contribution to the community doesn't end there. Zac and Zoe's business model includes donating half of their proceeds to local charities.

The siblings are able to be successful with the help of their parents, uncle and grandparents and their network of recycling neighbors who all pitch in to save their bottles and cans and assist Zoe and Zac in fulfilling their socially responsible mission.

Click below to watch a video of Zoe and Zac.

Council sends resolution and letter to state to dispute low-income housing requirements

The Costa Mesa City Council at a special meeting on Thursday Jan. 9 approved sending a resolution and letter to the California Department of Housing and Community Development that takes exception with the methodology proposed by the Southern California Association of Governments Regional Council to allocate housing requirements to cities for the next eight-year planning period.

The State has allocated 1.34 million new housing units to the Southern California Region with SCAG tasked with developing a methodology to fairly and appropriately distribute the housing allocation to all Southern California jurisdictions.

SCAG adopted a methodology that was not-vetted and there was no opportunity for public review or comments. The impacts from the changed methodology were unknown when it was adopted and the lengthy transparent public process was disregarded by a

last minute substitute motion that was not supported by SCAG staff. Based on this last-minute change to an unvetted methodology, Costa Mesa's allocation increased from 4,323 to 11,734 units.

In its resolution, the City is requesting that the state's Department of Housing and Community Development, which is tasked with approving the RHNA methodology, deny the unvetted methodology and, instead, direct SCAG to use the vetted, staff-recommended methodology.

"We strongly support developing a thoughtful plan to address the regional housing shortfall, especially affordable housing for individuals and families," Mayor Katrina Foley said. "However, the process was flawed and arbitrary. We support the transparent, publicly-vetted process and the proposal that was developed through it. We look forward to working with the state to correct this situation."

The resolution adopted Thursday makes it clear that the City supports housing development for all economic sectors and fully embraces meeting the community's fair share of the region's housing needs.

The modified Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation methodology approved by the SCAG Regional Council potentially compromises the City's access to critical funding needed to address housing production for all income levels.

The City of Costa Mesa has been a strong advocate for the development of housing, including affordable housing. Costa Mesa has expended significant local resources over the past decade toward addressing housing related issues and has produced over 1,600 new housing units during the current RHNA cycle, far above its assigned allocation. The City also owns and operates multiple low-income housing projects.

In 2019, the Council amended its Goals and Objectives to include the Goal to: "Address Housing Shortages and

Homelessness. We will continue our efforts to improve housing and to end homelessness in Costa Mesa using a comprehensive way, addressing the full continuum of housing needs from crisis-shelter to supportive housing to affordable to market rate for all.”

Costa Mesa has not only produced 1,600 new housing units, but has also permanently housed 42 homeless individuals by providing comprehensive wrap around services at its Bridge Shelter at Lighthouse Church.

Only a handful of cities had increases of over 7,000 units above the previously vetted methodology (Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach, Garden Grove, Westminster, and the City of Los Angeles).

New Energy and Sustainability Services Manager begins role at City Hall

Salem Afeworki, the city’s new Energy and Sustainability Services Manager and a 15-year veteran of providing sustainability, climate change and community engagement consulting services for multiple clients, began her new role in Costa Mesa on Tuesday Jan. 7, 2020.

“We are very pleased to have Ms. Afeworki join our city team to advance the City Council goals on energy efficiency and sustainability,” Mayor Katrina Foley said. “This work is critical as we strive to make the city more energy efficient and deal with the emergency of climate change.”

Before accepting the job in Costa Mesa, Afeworki was the Principal at Value Sustainability, a boutique-consulting firm that provides advisory services in sustainable business practices, clean energy and climate change based in Orange County. Afeworki started her career at the United Nations as a Communication officer and later worked for top management consulting and engineering firms as a sustainability leader and practitioner.

"We welcome Salem to our team and look forward to her considerable knowledge in this industry as the city looks to be more efficient in energy and all areas of government," City Manager Lori Farrell Harrison said.

In addition to consulting, she he served as a primary council member at Los Angeles Metro Sustainability Council and also at the City of Irvine Green Ribbon Committee. In this capacity, she has advised cities, counties and transportation agencies in Southern California on how to best address their environmental and social challenges.

"Globally cities are now leading the way in sustainability and in reducing carbon pollution," Afeworki said. "I am grateful for the opportunity to join City of Costa Mesa to advance local climate action and deliver on the City's ambitious goals. I applaud the City's Council members and senior leadership's vision for making sustainability a priority and for allocating the right resources to make it happen. We want the City of Costa Mesa to be a leader in sustainability in Orange County, and I commit to working with diverse stakeholders to develop bold strategies and programs that leaves no one behind and creates stronger, livable and equitable City for all residents."

Afeworki is passionate about climate change, renewable energy technologies and local community empowerment. She has conducted strategic sustainability and climate action planning as well as workshop facilitation, and program evaluation

projects in multi-disciplinary setting for a range of clients, including Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, Los Angeles County Public Works, City of Long Beach, City of Irvine and Port of Long Beach.

She has a multitude of specialized fellowships and training and has received numerous awards for her work including the 2019 Energy Executive by National Renewable Energy Laboratory, a 2017 Eco Leader by U.S Green Building Council Orange County, a Certificate of Recognition by the County of Orange for the 2016 Engineering Award and the 2016 Urban Land Institute OC/IE Emergent Leadership Award for the category of Engineering.

Afeworki has her bachelor's degree in journalism and communication from the University of Asmara, Eritrea, a master's degree in Environmental Management & Auditing, specialized in Renewable Energy, from the Universidad de Leon, Spain. She also have completed highly specialized leadership programs including a Climate Change Science and Solutions certificate from MIT and a Sustainable Environmental Management certificate from UC Berkeley.

She will report to Director of Public Services Raja Sethuraman.

Bridge Shelter Success: Costa Mesa resident celebrates New Year by being off the streets

and sober

Costa Mesa resident Doug Hawley has a special reason to celebrate the New Year.

After years of living on the streets, he is now sober, has a roof over his head and is seeking gainful employment thanks to his resolve and the hard work of Costa Mesa's outreach staff, the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter and the Illumination Foundation.

Hawley's journey from homelessness to sobriety and finding housing was a long one.

He suffered chronic back pain from a debilitating injury, lost his job washing windows, and then he took to a life on the streets and alcoholism.

Despite numerous attempt by outreach staff to assist him, he was unable to maintain his sobriety and/or follow-up on medical appointments. By living on the streets in extreme weather conditions, he even re-injured himself. And outreach staff stopped trying to help him as he expressed a desire to live independently.

Then the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter opened and Hawley saw an opportunity to change his life path for the better. He realized he had hit his bottom and needed help. He jumped at the chance of getting a bed there and he renewed his previous relationships with outreach staff.

He left the shelter after a few months, but this time he was determined to get well, stop drinking and work on his housing plan. He continued his relationship with outreach after he left the shelter and together they crafted a plan to move him off the streets.

As part of the plan, he agreed to attend two residential treatment programs and complete his permanent housing

assessment. Additionally, he began getting his physical and mental health life in order by following up on both medical and mental health appointments. He began taking medication for his chronic pain and agreed to take medication for alcohol cravings.

He agreed to continue consistent medical appointments to ensure that he was sufficiently stabilized once he gained housing.

Hawley's hard work resulting in him being matched for permanent supportive housing through the Illumination Foundation in Anaheim last September. He has been sober now for five months and despite experiencing deaths in the family and other hardships, he remains strong.

Outreach staff and the Illumination Foundation continue to support him on his sobriety journey with the next step will be obtaining a viable income source.

To learn more about the Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter and how Costa Mesa is helping individuals experiencing homelessness please visit our website at www.costamesaca.gov/homelessness.

Residential street sweeping takes a break for the Christmas and New Year holidays

Due to the observation of the Christmas and New Year Holidays there will be no residential street sweeping beginning

Wednesday, Dec. 25, 2019 through Friday Jan. 3, 2020.

Costa Mesa Sanitary District also observes these holidays pushing trash collection back one day.

This results in residential gutter lines being cluttered with trash cans making it difficult for street sweeper operators to do an efficient job. It has been requested that no citations be written on those days.

Street sweeping will resume back to normal on Monday Jan. 6, 2020.

The following tasks that Clean Street operators will be conducting next week.

- City wide alley street sweeping.
- Sweeping of Park parking lots and other City owned facilities.
- Temporary posting on industrial streets.
- Night route sweeping on all arterial streets.

City Council approves new government and global education partnership with EF Education First

On Tuesday Dec. 17, the Costa Mesa City Council approved an agreement with EF Education First, an international language education company that offers language learning, travel, and

cultural exchange programs, to occupy and improve the former home of Trinity Broadcast Network.

The proposed project, recognized globally for its unique English language immersion program, could serve up to 1,374 students from all over the world and add 70 education jobs to Costa Mesa.

The agreement brings in \$1.8 million to the City over a 15-year period for infrastructure improvements in the vicinity of the project. EF Education First will also provide a Competitive language immersion Scholarship Program for up to five high school students annually who live in Costa Mesa for the next 10 years.

“Costa Mesa is already a world class destination for the arts and shopping,” Mayor Katrina Foley said. “Now we will earn a place on the world stage as an international destination for learning. Our new community partners already demonstrated their civic-minded intentions by engaging our residents to gather support for their project and by investing in our local students and our active transportation infrastructure. This project helps boost our local economy with millions in annual revenue from tourism, shopping, dining, and new property taxes. I’m excited for them to join our Costa Mesa community.”

EF Education First will renovate the existing three-story building into a campus with 50 classrooms, a student services area, cafeteria, and faculty/staff offices, new dormitories and outdoor recreational facilities including a pool with a pool house; and landscaping. It will generate less traffic as it is a development that will focus on active transportation.

Prior to voting for the agreement, Mayor Pro-Tem John Stephens spoke passionately about his experiences as a foreign exchange student. He noted that the agreement potentially results in \$500,000 in additional revenue to the Newport-Mesa Unified School District, increased construction jobs, \$80 million

pumped into the local economy and \$3 million to host families in Costa Mesa

EF Education First is an international education company founded in 1965. For the past 50 years, EF has provided people of all ages with learning opportunities around the world, from educational travel to language training, academic degree programs and cultural exchange.

“EF Education First is excited to develop a world-class international education campus in Costa Mesa and bring thousands of students from around the globe to experience this beautiful city while learning English,” said Shawna Marino, the vice president of EF Education First. “We look forward to putting down roots in the City of the Arts and showing the world all that Costa Mesa has to offer. We believe that 15 months of extensive community outreach improved our design and operations, and we appreciate the Planning Commission and City Council approving this project.”

Marino also said the organization was fortunate to work with excellent City planners and City leadership, including Development Services Director Barry Curtis, on this project.

City Hall to close for the holidays

We want to remind the public that this year City Hall and the Corporation Yard will be closed from Monday, Dec. 23 through Wednesday, Jan. 1.

We will reopen these facilities to the public on Thursday, Jan. 2.

As usual, essential services such as public safety, inspection, maintenance and field services will still be available.

Have a happy and safe holiday season.

Maintenance Supervisor Dan Jojola Snoops out the City Manager Leadership Award

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison presented Maintenance Supervisor Daniel Jojola with the City Manager Leadership Award at the monthly Meet and Greet on Dec. 12.

“I have heard nothing but great things about Daniel,” Farrell Harrison said. “His dedication to his work here in Costa Mesa is well known and respected by his co-workers and I personally want to thank him for all the work he has done over the last few weeks to help us prepare Snoopy House for the community. It’s a job well done and recognition well earned.”

Jojola is responsible for effectively planning, organizing, supervising and participating in the work of subordinate staff members engaged in all aspects of building maintenance operations. Jojola has exhibited excellent leadership, dedication and hard work to see that work is completed on time, within budget and to the highest standards.

This time of year, Jojola transforms into an event planner helping create Snoopy House. He is in charge of loading in the various props, stringing of the various Christmas lighting and electrical circuits. When the event is over, he is in charge

of breakdown and load out of all things Snoopy House. The residents of Costa Mesa have come to love this annual tradition.

Jojola began his career with the City of Costa Mesa in 2007 as a Building Maintenance Technician. In 2015, Jojola was elevated to his current position of Building Maintenance Supervisor.

Jojola attended Long Beach City College where he earned an Associate of Science Degree with an emphasis on Electrical Science and theory. It is at Long Beach City College where he learned about the job opening at the City of Costa Mesa.

In addition to honoring Jojola, Farrell Harrison congratulated several new hires, the newly promoted and two retirees.

New hires include Genesis Jimenez a new Office Specialist working in the City Clerk's office, Zihui Lei a new Intern working in the Planning division of our Development Services Department, Naomi Oosterhof a new Permit Processing specialist working in the Building division of Development Services.

From Fire & Rescue Amy Ellard is a new Office Specialist II assigned to Community Risk Reduction and Herlinda Flores is a new Intern also assigned to Community Risk Reduction.

In Parks & Community Services, Joseph Murguia is a new Community Services Leader II working in Youth & Sports, Maria Pascua is a new Community Services Leader III working at the Downtown Community Center, Crystal Pineda is a new Community Services Leader II also assigned to our Downtown Community Center, Stephanie Smith is also a new Community Services Leader II assigned to the LEAP program, Clayton Vranic is a new Community Services Leader II assigned to Youth & Sports and Stefanie Da Silva is a new Community Services Leader III assigned to the ROCKS program.

Finally, Albert Ricci is a new Police Aide at the Police

Department.

Those promoted include Ines Galmiche to Assistant Planner in the Development Services Department, Jason Arita to Community Services Specialist at the Police Department and Elena Polyakova White as the new Engineering Technician I in Public Services.

Those retiring include Bart Mejia, who started with the City in July 1991 as Contract Administrator and in June 2016 assumed the role as City Engineer. His accomplishments as City Engineer included Fire Station 1, Lions Park Library, City Council Chambers, and Arlington Bioswale and Trail.

Also, Code Enforcement Officer Barbara Zwart is retiring after being part of the Costa Mesa family for over 11 years. She started her journey with the city as a temporary worker in the Development Services Department in 2007.

Street sweeping cancelled for Thanksgiving holiday

Due to the observation of the Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no residential street sweeping Thursday, Nov. 28 and Friday Nov. 29.

The street sweeping hiatus coincides with residential trash collection being pushed back one day due to the Thanksgiving holiday. This results in residential gutter lines being cluttered with trash cans making it impossible for street sweeper operators to do an efficient job.

Street sweeping will resume back to normal schedule the week

of Dec. 2.

For more information, residents can call the city's street sweeping hotline at (714) 327-7471, which has been updated with this information.