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LA County Board Affirms Commitment to Global Climate.

Volume 25 Issue 49

MONDAY 1/26/26

[smdp.com](http://smdp.com)

## Election season begins with a trio of ballot measures

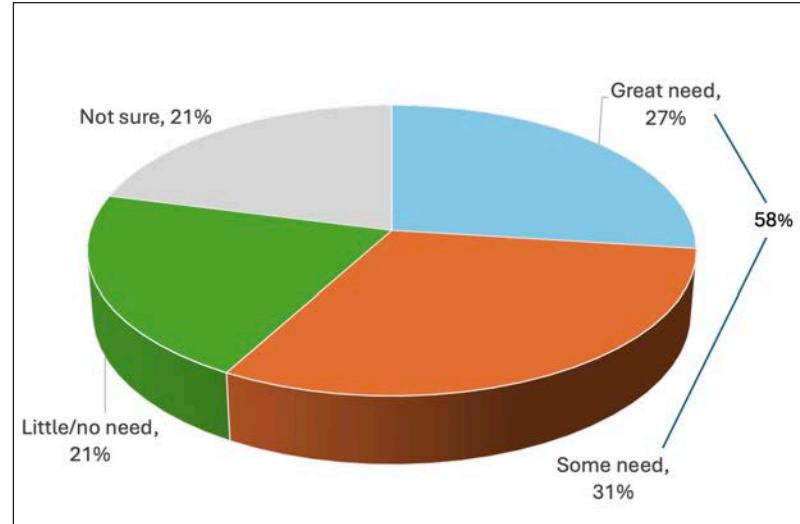
**MATTHEW HALL**

Daily Press Editor

Santa Monica's 2026 election season has officially begun with the filing of two competing citizen-initiated ballot measures and a potential third up for discussion by City Council on Tuesday.

In recent weeks, proponents have filed initiatives that would establish parks and affordable housing at Santa Monica Airport and create permanent funding for local schools through a parcel tax. Meanwhile, the City Council is considering placing its own parcel tax measure on the November ballot to maintain city services and continue subsidizing the school district.

On Jan. 13, three proponents



Courtesy photo

**SURVEY:** City Hall studied a proposed parcel tax to fund its ongoing agreement with local schools. Two-thirds of voters aware of the agreement believe public schools need the funding compared to 53% of unaware voters, while 71% of Yes voters support the need versus 49% of No voters.

SEE BALLOT PAGE 6

## Former Santa Monica business owner arrested for stealing millions in homeless fraud case

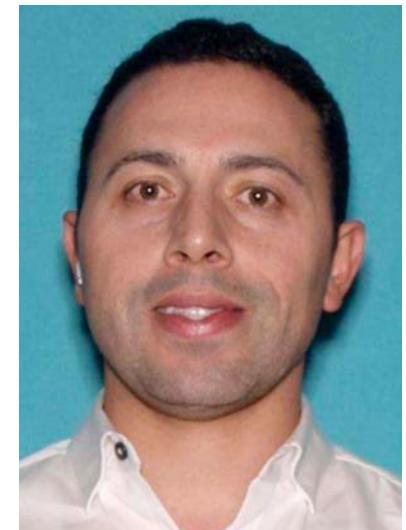
**MATTHEW HALL**

Daily Press Editor

A Westwood man was arrested Friday on federal charges alleging he fraudulently obtained \$23 million in public money intended to combat homelessness and pocketed at least \$10 million for personal luxuries, including a \$7 million house, private jet travel and a vacation property in Greece.

Alexander Soofer, 42, faces wire fraud charges after federal agents arrested him at his Westwood home Friday morning. He is expected to make his initial court appearance Friday afternoon in U.S. District Court in Santa Ana.

"California is the poster child of rampant fraud, waste, and abuse of tax dollars," said First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli. "The state has facilitated the spending of billions of dollars to combat homelessness,



Courtesy photo

**ALEXANDER SOOFER**

with little to show for it and almost no oversight."

SEE FRAUD PAGE 8

## Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. names Debbie Lee as new CEO

**MATTHEW HALL**

Daily Press Editor

Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. announced Thursday the appointment of Debbie Lee as its new chief executive officer, bringing back a familiar face to lead the nonprofit organization at a critical juncture for the city's central district.

Lee will assume the role Jan. 26 with a starting base salary of \$318,000, returning to an organization where she previously served in senior leadership for nearly eight years.

Most recently, Lee worked as senior managing director at Actum LLC, advising public, private and nonprofit organizations on public affairs, strategic communications,

crisis communications and community engagement. Before that, she spent nearly eight years as Santa Monica's chief communications officer, a position she left in 2022.

"The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Debbie Lee as CEO of Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. Debbie's extensive experience

in public affairs, community engagement and strategic planning, paired with her long-standing connection to Santa Monica, make her exceptionally qualified to lead the organization forward," said Michele Aaronson, DTSM board chair.

"She brings both vision and pragmatism. She understands the complexities of our Downtown and the opportunities ahead, and we look

forward to working with Debbie as she strengthens partnerships and works to enhance the Downtown experience in alignment with the needs and objectives of our community."

Lee first joined Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. after working at the Santa Monica Convention

SEE DTSM PAGE 8

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NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City of Santa Monica invites sealed proposals for

- RFP # 465 TRANSIT RIDERSHIP SOFTWARE FOR NTD REPORTING.
- Submission Deadline is March 3, 2026 at 3:00 PM Pacific Time.

Proposals must include forms furnished by the City of Santa Monica. Request for Proposals may be obtained on the **CITY'S ONLINE VENDOR PORTAL**. The website for this Request for Proposals and related documents is OpenGov (<https://secure.procurenow.com/portal/santa-monica-ca>). There is no charge for the RFP package.

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# Council to consider 'right to return' rules for businesses on public property

**MATTHEW HALL**

Daily Press Editor

The Santa Monica City Council will consider Tuesday an ordinance requiring hotels on city-owned property and hospitality businesses on the Santa Monica Pier to recall laid-off workers and retain employees during ownership changes.

The proposed ordinance, scheduled for first reading at the Jan. 27 meeting, comes as the city prepares for major international events while facing continued financial uncertainty and potential economic pressures that could threaten hospitality workers' job security.

"Changes in ownership, control, or operation of hospitality businesses on the Pier can trigger mass layoffs and displace employees who are skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced in providing a safe, clean and enjoyable experience for the millions of visitors who come to the Pier each year," according to a staff report from Interim City Attorney Heidi Von Tongeln.

The ordinance would amend the city's existing worker recall code and create new retention requirements specifically for Pier hospitality businesses with five or more employees.

Under the recall provisions, hotels on city-owned property and Pier hospitality businesses would be required to offer available positions to workers who were laid off for economic reasons after Sept. 9, 2025. To qualify, workers must have performed at least two hours of work within city boundaries in a particular week, been employed for six months or more, and had a separation due to lack of business, reduction in force or other non-disciplinary economic reason.

Employers would be required to make offers in writing and give workers at least 10 days to accept or decline.

The new retention chapter would require Pier hospitality businesses to keep workers for 90 days following a change in business control. The ordinance mandates written employment offers and performance evaluations after the 90-day retention period.

The City Council directed staff in July 2025 to develop right to recall and

labor peace ordinances at the request of Mayor Torosis, Mayor Pro Tem Zwick and Councilmember Raskin. The city attorney's office prioritized the recall and retention measures after threats of litigation emerged over the labor peace proposal.

The California Restaurant Association challenged the potential mandate, which would have applied to new or renewed leases on city property including the Santa Monica Pier. In an August letter, they argued the ordinance violates federal labor law and the Constitution, claiming it interferes with workers' rights to choose unionization without external pressure.

Labor peace agreements typically require employers to allow union organizing while unions agree not to strike. Supporters argue they prevent business disruptions, but critics warn of economic damage.

The proposed ordinance exempts nonprofit businesses and excludes managerial, supervisory or confidential employees. It allows supersession by bona fide collective bargaining agreements and prohibits retaliation against workers who exercise their rights under the ordinance.

Enforcement provisions include civil action or injunction options, with possible damages for violations and attorney's fee recovery in enforcement actions.

City staff said Santa Monica has a history of worker protections in its tourism and hospitality industries. The city first adopted a worker recall ordinance in 2001 following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and economic decline. In 2019, the council adopted hotel worker protections that included retention requirements during ownership changes.

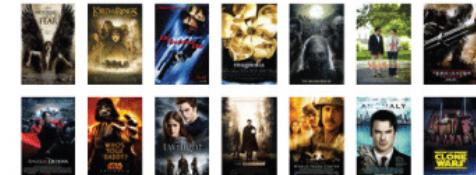
The current worker recall provisions for businesses in the Coastal Zone and extended Downtown core with \$5 million in gross receipts remain unchanged under the proposed ordinance.

The City Council will consider introducing the ordinance for first reading Tuesday. Staff recommends the council adopt a finding that the ordinance is exempt from California Environmental Quality Act review.

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# Savor Santa Monica during Dine LA Restaurant Week as the city's culinary scene takes center stage



**DINE LA:** From January 23 through February 6, more than 45 local restaurants across the city will participate in Dine LA Restaurant Week.

**MICHELLE EDGAR**

Special to the Daily Press

Santa Monica is inviting Angelenos and visitors alike back to the table.

From January 23 through February 6, more than 45 local restaurants across the city will participate in Dine LA Restaurant Week, offering curated prix fixe menus that showcase Santa Monica's depth, diversity, and global culinary influence. With more than 400 restaurants spanning eight distinct neighborhoods, the beach city continues to solidify its reputation as one of Southern California's most dynamic dining destinations.

"Each year we look forward to welcoming both travelers and Southern California locals to Santa Monica to experience a sampling of our city's very special culinary landscape during Dine LA Restaurant Week," said Misti Kerns, President and CEO of Santa Monica Travel and Tourism. "We invite all to visit our beach city for a taste of local farmers market flavors, concepts by homegrown Santa Monica chefs and well loved legacy restaurants."

For chefs and restaurateurs, Restaurant Week represents more than a seasonal promotion. It is a moment to reconnect with the community and introduce new guests to signature menus, hospitality experiences, and the stories behind the food.

"Dine LA is a celebration of the Los Angeles dining community, and at Orla by Michael Mina, we use this moment to showcase the dishes our guests return for time and again,"

Each year we look forward to welcoming both travelers and Southern California locals to Santa Monica to experience a sampling of our city's very special culinary landscape during Dine LA Restaurant Week

- Misti Kerns, President and CEO of Santa Monica Travel and Tourism

shares Houssem Tasco, Hotel Manager of Regent Santa Monica Beach. "From mezze like Zucchini Fritters with tzatziki and

SEE RESTAURANT PAGE 8



## Weather

**Monday:** Patchy fog before 10am. Otherwise, mostly sunny, with a high near 67.

**Monday Night:** Mostly clear, with a low around 49.

**Tuesday:** Sunny, with a high near 68.

**Tuesday Night:** Patchy fog after 10pm. Otherwise, mostly cloudy, with a low around 51.

Date	Day	Time (LST/LDT)	Predicted (ft)	High/Low
2026/01/26	Mon	02:29 AM	5.06	H
2026/01/26	Mon	10:23 AM	0.78	L
2026/01/26	Mon	4:41 PM	2.48	H
2026/01/26	Mon	8:01 PM	2.21	L
2026/01/27	Tue	03:36 AM	5.35	H
2026/01/27	Tue	11:41 AM	0.02	L
2026/01/27	Tue	6:43 PM	2.81	H
2026/01/27	Tue	9:47 PM	2.53	L
2026/01/28	Wed	04:44 AM	5.72	H
2026/01/28	Wed	12:39 PM	-0.70	L
2026/01/28	Wed	7:34 PM	3.21	H
2026/01/28	Wed	11:15 PM	2.52	L
2026/01/29	Thu	05:47 AM	6.13	H
2026/01/29	Thu	1:26 PM	-1.26	L
2026/01/29	Thu	8:10 PM	3.56	H
2026/01/30	Fri	12:23 AM	2.28	L
2026/01/30	Fri	06:43 AM	6.49	H
2026/01/30	Fri	2:09 PM	-1.60	L
2026/01/30	Fri	8:42 PM	3.85	H
2026/01/31	Sat	01:18 AM	1.94	L
2026/01/31	Sat	07:32 AM	6.71	H
2026/01/31	Sat	2:47 PM	-1.72	L
2026/01/31	Sat	9:14 PM	4.09	H
2026/02/01	Sun	02:07 AM	1.61	L
2026/02/01	Sun	08:18 AM	6.71	H
2026/02/01	Sun	3:24 PM	-1.63	L
2026/02/01	Sun	9:47 PM	4.30	H
2026/02/02	Mon	02:53 AM	1.36	L
2026/02/02	Mon	09:00 AM	6.47	H
2026/02/02	Mon	3:58 PM	-1.34	L
2026/02/02	Mon	10:20 PM	4.47	H
2026/02/03	Tue	03:39 AM	1.22	L
2026/02/03	Tue	09:41 AM	5.99	H
2026/02/03	Tue	4:30 PM	-0.89	L
2026/02/03	Tue	10:53 PM	4.59	H
2026/02/04	Wed	04:25 AM	1.19	L

## Daily Lottery

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site at <http://www.calottery.com>



Draw Date: 1/21  
11 26 27 53 55  
Power#: 12  
Jackpot: 20 M



Draw Date: 1/22  
6 8 11 27 28



Draw Date: 1/20  
8 47 50 56 70  
Mega#: 12  
Jackpot: 266 M



Draw Date: 1/22  
EVENING: 9 6 9  
Draw Date: 1/22  
MIDDAY: 1 7 1



Draw Date: 1/21  
4 18 20 23 39  
Mega#: 3  
Jackpot: 22 M



Draw Date: 1/22  
1st: 10 - Solid Gold  
2nd: 03 - Hot Shot  
3rd: 08 - Gorgeous George  
Race Time: 1:45:25

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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## Name Change

## Name Change

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## GUEST COMMENTARY

Send comments to [editor@smdp.com](mailto:editor@smdp.com)

## Newsom wants to overhaul state oversight of California schools. Will students benefit?

Gov. Gavin Newsom dropped a brief and vaguely worded section into his State of the State address earlier this month, suggesting an overhaul of how California's vast public education system is managed.

"It's long overdue that we modernize the management of our educational system," Newsom said, "and so in the budget I'll be submitting tomorrow, I'm proposing that we unify the policymaking by the State Board of Education and the Department of Education, allowing the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to align our education policies from early childhood through college."

The budget's passage on this was longer, but still failed to explicitly say what Newsom had in mind.

The proposal cited two reports that bemoaned the multiple, often overlapping and sometimes competitive, state and local entities that govern the schools. One was California's so-called Master Plan for Education, published in 2002, and the other was from Policy Analysis for California Education, or PACE, a multi-university think tank, that had been issued just weeks earlier.

The budget proposed to "move oversight authority of the management of" the state Department of Education and local districts under the California Board of Education.

Thus, without saying so directly, Newsom would strip the elected state superintendent of schools of managerial authority over the state Department of Education, relegating the officeholder to an ombudsman or advisor. Management would be vested in the Board of Education, which is appointed by the governor, and an appointed executive director.

"These changes will strengthen governance of California's education system to provide coherence and meaningful accountability to address the needs of students, parents, teachers, school staff, and administrators," the budget proposal declared.

The current superintendent, former state legislator Tony Thurmond, complained that he was not consulted about what would be a major overhaul of responsibility for a system that serves nearly 6 million students and is the largest single portion of the state budget.

"This governance proposal doesn't establish any structures proven to move the needle on student outcomes," Thurmond, who is running for governor, said, "and instead shifts authority to implement TK-12 education programs away from the official who California voters have elected to lead our state's public schools."

It's apparent that Newsom's administration had been laying the groundwork for the power shift — or power grab — long before the State of the



Photo by Laure Andrillon for CalMatters  
**OAKLAND:** Students look forward during a lesson at the Melrose Leadership Academy in Oakland, on Sept. 23, 2024.

State address. The PACE report issued in December was part of the process. It called for exactly what Newsom proposes.

"California's education governance system is a complex network of agencies and entities designed to serve the most diverse and expansive TK-12 population in the United States," the PACE report declared. "This system incorporates state, regional, and local levels of authority, each tasked with specific responsibilities and oversight. At its core, the structure seeks to balance statewide education goals with local control and accountability."

"However, its complexity often results in overlapping responsibilities, fragmented authority, and challenges in ensuring streamlined decision-making."

PACE issued a statement backing the change from Michael Kirst, the state's foremost academic authority on education and architect of the school finance overhaul, the Local Control Funding Formula enacted in 2012 under then-Gov. Jerry Brown.

Kirst called it "a new vision and a dramatic overhaul" that would address a 19th century governance structure.

"The lack of fundamental change since then has hindered education progress," he said.

Politics aside, Newsom's proposal would streamline governance that is now opaque and fragmented, and shields the system's many points of authority from accountability. However, by vesting almost total authority in the governor and his or her appointees, it will be more difficult for a governor to escape accountability if educational achievement, which now languishes, doesn't markedly improve.

Dan Walters, Opinion Columnist

## COMMUNITY NEWS

## LA County

## LA County Board Affirms Commitment to Global Climate Action

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved a motion affirming the county's commitment to global climate action as President Trump announced the United States' withdrawal from 66 international agreements, including major environmental organizations.

Supervisor Lindsey P. Horvath's motion underscores that Los Angeles County will not backslide on environmental protections that safeguard public health, economic stability and the future of the region's ten million residents. The county will continue advancing climate policies aligned with the Paris Agreement and pursue deeper collaboration with national and international climate coalitions.

"Climate change is not a distant threat — it is already devastating our communities," Horvath said. "Rolling back environmental protections now would be reckless and dangerous. Los Angeles County refuses to abandon the standards that protect our air, our water, and our future."

Matt Petersen, president and CEO of the Los Angeles Cleantech Incubator and board chair of Climate Mayors, said local and state governments must now lead on behalf of Americans and future generations.

Los Angeles County has adopted some of the most ambitious climate strategies in the world, including the OurCounty Sustainability Plan, the 2045 Climate Action Plan, the Climate Ready Communities initiative and a commitment to phase out oil drilling while expanding clean energy access.

Horvath's motion directs the county to deepen engagement with international climate organizations, inventory progress toward global climate goals and ensure continued investment in climate resilience.

"As the federal government withdraws from essential international climate frameworks, including the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, subnational leadership has never been more vital," said Amy Holm, executive director of the Climate Registry. "LA County's participation in international climate initiatives will amplify the voices of the nearly ten million residents."

“

Climate change is not a distant threat — it is already devastating our communities

- Lindsey P. Horvath, Supervisor

”

EDITED BY SMDP STAFF

## Malibu

## Bestselling Author Dion Leonard to Discuss 'Finding Gobi' at Library Speaker Series

The City of Malibu and LA County Library will host bestselling author and ultramarathon runner Dion Leonard Feb. 4 at 7 p.m. at the Malibu Library.

Leonard will discuss his book "Finding Gobi," which tells the story of his 155-mile ultramarathon across China's Gobi Desert, where he met a stray dog that would change his life.

During the 2016 race, a small dog began following Leonard and matched his stride throughout the grueling course. The dog, whom Leonard named Gobi, became his companion to the finish line. When Gobi went missing after the race, Leonard launched a nationwide search to reunite with his running partner.

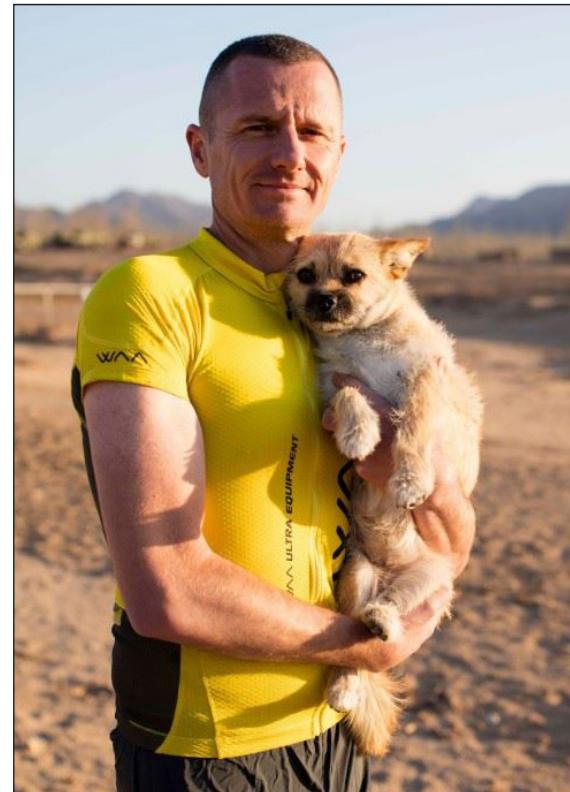
"The Malibu Library Speaker Series is an excellent way to celebrate art, literature, science, music and other cultural endeavors, that brings experts and authors to our community that will educate and inspire," Mayor Marianne Riggins said. "Dion's story is so unique yet universally captivating and it is truly a treat for everyone."

At the event, Leonard will share details of his journey with Gobi, the search to bring the dog home and the bond they formed. The book explores themes of determination, love and loyalty.

Books will be available for purchase at the event, followed by a signing.

The event is free with RSVP at <https://visit.lacountylibrary.org/event/15337494>. Additional information is available at [MalibuCity.org/Speakers](http://MalibuCity.org/Speakers).

The Malibu Library is located at 23519 West Civic Center Way.



Courtesy photo  
**AUTHOR:** Dion Leonard will discuss his book 'Finding Gobi'.

EDITED BY SMDP STAFF

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Santa Monica Daily Press

**BALLOT**

FROM PAGE 1

filed the “Great Park and Community Housing Initiative,” which would require 75% of the Santa Monica Airport land be devoted to parks and open space, with the remaining 25% designated for 3,000 units of permanently affordable housing once the airport closes.

The initiative was filed by Housing Authority Board member Hajar Muqtasid, UniteHere Local 11 member Christina Navarro and Santa Monica for Renters Rights Housing Committee member Ralph Mechur.

The measure would amend the city’s General Plan to establish voter-approved limits on development of the airport site. All housing would be permanently affordable to households earning no more than 120% of area median income, with at least half of units available to households at 80% of median income or below. The affordable housing would be subject to sustainability standards and community workforce agreements for projects with 40 or more units.

Development projects would be required to give preference to Santa Monica residents, local workers, people previously displaced by past government action, and their direct descendants. The measure states it is the intent of voters that all airport land remain in city ownership.

Early reactions to the measure have been mostly negative. The Great Parks Coalition, a grassroots group that has long advocated for the entire airport to be parkland, has said it opposes the measure.

Just days after the airport initiative was filed, on Jan. 20, three proponents submitted the “Excellent Santa Monica Public Schools Parcel Tax Measure,” which would establish a \$495 annual parcel tax on real property within the city to provide permanent funding for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District.

The measure was filed by State Sen. Ben Allen, SMMUSD Board of Education President Alicia Mignano and Community for Excellent Public Schools Chair Ted Winterer.

The initiative would establish a flat-rate annual parcel tax adjusted yearly for inflation. All revenue would be transferred to SMMUSD or any successor district serving Santa Monica students and could not be redirected by any government entity.

In their notice of intent, the proponents noted that the City Council adopted a resolution declaring fiscal distress on Oct. 28, 2025. They warned that expiration of the Master Facilities Use Agreement between the city and school district on June 30, 2027, “would be devastating to SMMUSD, its students and teachers.”

The parcel tax would begin collection on July 1 of the year after voter approval and is intended to replace funding currently provided through the expiring facilities agreement.

Funds could be used for teacher retention, assistance for disadvantaged students, art and music education, early childhood programs, facility maintenance and after-hours community access to school facilities. The measure prohibits using the funds for administrator salaries, land acquisition or construction of new buildings.

Oversight could be provided by the SMMUSD Board of Education or its existing Financial Oversight Committee. If the district does not establish oversight, the city must create an oversight committee. The

district would also be required to obtain independent annual performance audits.

The measure provides exemptions for seniors 65 and over, 501(c)(3) nonprofits, 100% affordable housing projects, and religious organizations or schools.

Separately, the City Council is exploring its own parcel tax measure for the November 2026 ballot that would generate approximately \$12 million annually to offset the city’s current General Fund subsidy to SMMUSD while sustaining funding for essential city services.

A poll of 499 registered Santa Monica voters conducted Oct. 8-16, 2025, tested two versions of a city-sponsored parcel tax: a flat tax of \$540 per parcel and a square footage-based tax of \$0.08 per square foot.

The survey found initial support in the mid-40s based solely on the ballot summary, falling short of the two-thirds threshold required for passage of a government-initiated special tax. However, majority support in the mid-50s emerged for both versions after voters learned how funds would be used locally and not diverted to state or federal governments.

The flat tax version earned majority support from homeowners after additional information, while the square footage tax lagged by approximately 15 points.

The proposed ballot language reads: “To maintain funding for homelessness, firefighters, 911 emergency services, and libraries, while preserving city funding for Santa Monica’s public schools to retain quality teachers and improve education quality, shall the measure approving a tax of \$540 per parcel, generating approximately \$12,000,000 annually until repealed by voters, exempting seniors, with funds that cannot be taken by the state or federal governments and can only be used in Santa Monica, be adopted?”

The city’s measure would also include exemptions for seniors 65 and older, 501(c)(3) nonprofits, 100% affordable housing projects, and religious organizations or schools.

Both citizen-initiated measures require signatures from at least 10% of Santa Monica’s registered voters to qualify for the ballot. If qualified, both would need a simple majority to pass and would be amendable only by voter approval.

The city clerk’s office will now prepare ballot titles and summaries for each measure before signature gathering can begin.

If the City Council directs staff to proceed with adding its parcel tax to the November 2026 ballot, the estimated cost to place the measure ranges between \$42,000 and \$47,000. The city-sponsored special tax would require approval by two-thirds of voters, a higher threshold than the simple majority needed for the citizen-initiated measures.

Should both the City and citizen-initiative make it to the ballot, any conflict between the two would likely be resolved through the text of the specific proposals. The citizen-initiative already contains both a conflict clause stating it will prevail entirely over any competing measure receiving fewer votes and a coexistence clause expressing intent to work alongside similar tax measures at other government levels. Any measure stemming from the City Council would likely contain similar language allowing whichever measure received the most votes to supersede the other.

editor@smdp.com

**COMMUNITY NEWS****Santa Monica****Former Santa Monica College Student’s Film Debut Screens at Santa Barbara Festival**

A Santa Monica College student and former Amazon product manager will see his directorial debut premiere at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival next month.

Adam Byrnes’ film “Two Lie Together” will screen Feb. 11 at 5:30 p.m. during the festival’s 41st edition. The film, which Byrnes co-wrote, produced and directed, was selected from thousands of worldwide submissions.

“As a first-time director, I am thrilled to have ‘Two Lie Together’ premiere in Santa Barbara,” Byrnes said. “This film is so personal to me and something I am excited to share with an audience.”

The suspenseful family drama explores generational trauma, past choices and the consequences of secrets. The story follows Ben and Anne, a couple whose seemingly perfect life unravels when a home intruder takes them hostage and uncovers a shattering truth.

Byrnes’ path to filmmaking represents a dramatic career shift. He previously worked as a product manager at Amazon, where he led the consumer team at Amazon Care, a service connecting customers virtually with medical professionals in under 60 seconds.

The pandemic prompted his career change.

“They say that your dreams always come to you as a whisper,” Byrnes said. “But until the pandemic, it was always drowned out by other priorities, like earning a paycheck or climbing the ladder. The pandemic was the first time it was quiet enough to hear the whisper that has been there throughout my life.”

In 2022, Byrnes took a sabbatical and enrolled in Santa Monica College’s film production program. In 2025, he was selected from eight competing students to direct the program’s capstone film. He has since made multiple short films and is developing ideas for his first feature with producing partner Matt Ippolito, who also produced and stars in “Two Lie Together.”

“It’s never too late to start something,” Byrnes said. “And just because you’ve been doing something for a long time doesn’t mean you can’t change. Life is too short not to try.”

The Santa Barbara International Film Festival screening is open to the public. Tickets and festival passes are available at [sbiff.org](http://sbiff.org). A Q&A session with the filmmaker will follow the screening.

EDITED BY SMDP STAFF



Courtesy image

**SMC:** Former SMC student gets directorial debut premiere at the Film Festival.

## COMMUNITY NEWS

## Pacific Palisades

## Wildfire Survivor Breaks Ground on Home Rebuild Using Zero-Percent Interest Loan

Pacific Palisades wildfire survivor Susan Blumenthal has begun rebuilding her home using a zero-percent interest gap loan, marking a critical milestone in recovery efforts following last year's devastating fire.

Blumenthal lost both her home and accessory dwelling unit in the Palisades fire. She qualified for financing through Habitat for Humanity of Greater Los Angeles' ReBUILD LA program based on income and other criteria, allowing her to rebuild without taking on high-interest debt that could derail her recovery.

"There are so many blessings that come out of horrible situations. One of them is a neighborhood coming together—that's a blessing," Blumenthal said, reflecting on finding hope as her community works to restore what was lost.

The ReBUILD LA initiative prioritizes families least likely to recover without support, including low- and moderate-income households and uninsured or underinsured survivors. The program offers an alternative to conventional high-interest lending for families already facing financial hardship.

While Blumenthal's construction began, Habitat LA and NBCUniversal volunteers worked simultaneously at Casa Gateway, a senior residential community in the Pacific Palisades Highlands. The volunteers focused on landscaping restoration, vegetation clearing and planting to improve safety and strengthen the land for residents who have faced prolonged displacement.

The senior community has been impacted by multiple disasters, including wildfire, flooding and mudslides, leaving residents with limited resources to rebuild. The restoration work aims to improve safety conditions and restore dignity for displaced seniors.

Habitat LA's financing programs help survivors rebuild without accumulating debt that makes recovery

**66**  
There are so many blessings that come out of horrible situations. One of them is a neighborhood coming together—that's a blessing  
- Susan Blumenthal

impossible. The organization remains committed to supporting wildfire survivors across Pacific Palisades, Malibu and Altadena, helping families stabilize, rebuild and return home permanently.

The construction milestone reflects the ongoing recovery in Pacific Palisades and highlights the critical role of long-term, affordable support for wildfire survivors working to rebuild their lives.

EDITED BY SMDP STAFF



James Buck

**REBUILD:** Palisades survivor Susan Blumenthal begins the next chapter in rebuilding her home burned in last year's Palisade's fire.



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**FRAUD**

FROM PAGE 1

According to a federal affidavit, Soofer is executive director of Abundant Blessings, a Hyde Park-based charity that contracted with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority to provide housing for people who were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. By July 2023, Soofer had multiple contracts with LAHSA to provide housing and supportive services to more than 600 homeless program participants at multiple sites across South Los Angeles.

Between 2018 and 2025, Soofer received more than \$23 million in homeless housing funding. Of that amount, more than \$5 million came directly from LAHSA and more than \$17 million came through a downtown Los Angeles-based nonprofit called Special Service for Groups Inc.

Under his contracts, Soofer committed to house participants at sites he managed or pay third parties, including hotels or motels, to provide housing. Regardless of where participants were housed, Soofer committed to provide three healthy, balanced, nutritious meals daily.

But investigators say Soofer lied to LAHSA about how he was using taxpayer money, falsely stating he used it exclusively to combat the homelessness crisis when he was misappropriating millions of dollars for personal use. He also allegedly lied about payments supposedly being made to third-party vendors for homeless housing services and took steps to conceal that he was diverting money to personal bank accounts.

Investigators say Soofer made it falsely appear he was leasing properties for homeless housing from third-party landlords at market rate when he was instead paying himself above market rate and misappropriating money that could have been used to help alleviate the homeless housing crisis.

To cover up the fraud, authorities say Soofer fabricated fake and misleading invoices, at times stealing the names, addresses and logos of real companies to make payments appear legitimate.

When a LAHSA investigator asked Soofer if his charity's board knew how he was spending money, he said they did. But the investigator later learned the board was fake — some people did not exist, and others had never heard of Abundant Blessings or Soofer.

City and county investigators conducted site visits after receiving hotline complaints and noticing discrepancies in Soofer's billing and services. They found the only food items being served at sites were things such as ramen noodles, canned beans and breakfast bars — in contrast to the three-meal-a-day commitment for which the city had paid.

"Instead of providing three nutritious meals a day, this is what he was providing, ramen noodles and a microwave," Essayli said at a Friday press conference. "He was pocketing the rest of the money."

Rather than providing contracted services, Soofer allegedly pocketed at least \$10 million. He used public money for a down payment on his \$7 million Westwood home, millions of dollars in upgrades to that home, private schooling for his children, lavish spending in Las Vegas, private jet travel and stays at luxury

resorts across the United States — from Hawaii to Florida. Soofer also appeared to use \$475,000 to purchase a vacation property in Greece.

Federal agents seized Soofer's \$125,000 Range Rover during Friday's arrest.

"Soofer allegedly prioritized his own greed over decency and respect for the laws of our country," said Akil Davis, assistant director in charge of the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office. "The FBI and our law enforcement partners remain dedicated to investigating and holding accountable those, like Soofer, who we contend flagrantly disregarded our laws by seeking to enrich himself at the public's expense."

Los Angeles County District Attorney Nathan Hochman announced parallel state charges against Soofer, including 11 counts of conflict of interest violations, two felony counts for providing fraudulent documentation to investigators and five counts of forgery.

"Mr. Soofer called his company Abundant Blessings. The only abundant blessings he gave were to himself," Hochman said. "He literally bought for \$1,250 men's loafers lined with calfskin. For his wife, he bought for \$910 from Hermès, sandals lined with goatskin, and for \$2,450 he bought from Hermès a men's trotting jacket. This is how money was spent by Mr. Soofer instead of for meals and rooms for the homeless."

Hochman said the conflict of interest charges stem from Soofer's failure to disclose to LAHSA that he owned properties he claimed to be leasing for homeless housing.

If convicted on federal charges, Soofer faces a statutory maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison. The state charges carry a potential sentence of 17 years in state prison.

"Alexander Soofer is alleged to have stolen millions of dollars designated to combat homelessness in Los Angeles," said Special Agent in Charge Tyler Hatcher of IRS Criminal Investigation, Los Angeles Field Office. "These funds were intended to support the city's most vulnerable residents."

The arrest marks the third case announced by the Homelessness Fraud and Corruption Joint Task Force, which Essayli created to investigate the billions of dollars California has spent on homelessness. In October, the task force announced arrests of Cody Holmes, whose scheme involved over \$25 million, and Steven Tyler, whose scheme involved over \$16 million.

Essayli said more than two dozen additional significant investigations are ongoing.

"We know the public is hungry for accountability," Essayli said. "I assure you we are working on it, but we do have to ask for a little bit of patience."

The FBI, IRS Criminal Investigation and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Inspector General are investigating the case. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kerry L. Quinn and Kevin B. Reidy of the Major Frauds Section are prosecuting.

A complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in court.

editor@smdp.com

**ADVERTISE WITH US TODAY!****DTSM**

FROM PAGE 1

& Visitors Bureau. She rose to vice president by 2011, spearheading a major rebranding that transformed the old Bayside District Corporation into Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. As marketing director and later vice president, she oversaw marketing campaigns, special events and community outreach programs while liaising with City Hall on planning initiatives and public improvements.

In 2014, Santa Monica officials tapped Lee to serve as the city's first communications and public affairs officer, a newly created position in the city manager's office. She modernized and expanded the city's communications efforts, establishing Santa Monica's first comprehensive communications program.

Lee oversaw development of a new city website and integrated strategic communications into major policy initiatives, including campaigns on homelessness, mobility and lifelong learning. Her communications office played a role in disseminating information about a 2017 agreement with the Federal Aviation Administration that set Santa Monica on a path to close its municipal airport.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Lee led public messaging on health orders, closures and assistance programs. She helped launch the "We Are Santa Monica" initiative, which established a relief fund and advisory board that raised over \$1.3 million to support vulnerable residents and small businesses affected by the crisis.

**RESTAURANT**

FROM PAGE 3

Butternut Squash Hummus to standouts such as Baklava French Toast, the Alexandria Fish Fry, and our Baharat-spiced Organic Chicken Kebab, the menu reflects Orla's Eastern Mediterranean roots, inspired by Chef Mina's travels through Egypt and Greece and shaped by the ease of coastal California."

At iconic Santa Monica institution Michael's, the opportunity carries both creative and cultural significance.

"Dine LA Restaurant Week is meaningful to us as chefs because it brings people together around the table and invites the community to experience our food in a very accessible way," said Michael's Chef Job Carder. "It allows us to cook with intention, highlight seasonal ingredients, and welcome both new and familiar faces into our dining room. Our hope each year is that guests feel the warmth, care, and sense of place that defines Michael's, and that their experience extends beyond restaurant week."

Across the city, international flavors are also taking the spotlight. At Fitoor, owner Anupama Bhambri sees Restaurant Week as a chance to reshape perceptions and expand palates.

"Restaurant Week highlights the dining experience by actually getting people to come out and dine instead of ordering in," Bhambri said. "It makes venues approachable and gives diners a more affordable way to try new cuisines. Our mission at Fitoor is to change the perception of Indian cuisine one dish at a time. There is so much more to Indian food than the usual staples. We want guests to have a completely unique and elevated experience when they walk through our doors."

Oceanfront dining is also front and center

After nearly eight years as the city's communications chief, Lee announced her departure in early 2022.

"Our Downtown is entering a formative period that offers real opportunity to renew a district that reflects the creativity, resilience and spirit of Santa Monica," Lee said. "There is meaningful work already underway, supported by dedicated teams within the public and private sectors. I am grateful to return to DTSM as CEO with that foundation in place."

"I look forward to working alongside the DTSM Board and partners across the city to support a Downtown that serves residents, supports local businesses and welcomes visitors from across the region," Lee said. "This district has always held a special place in the imagination of California and a special place in my heart."

As CEO, Lee will advance the organization's mission to support a clean, safe, welcoming and economically vibrant downtown. Her portfolio will include oversight of programs supporting place-making, economic development, ambassador services, marketing and stakeholder collaboration.

Downtown Santa Monica, Inc. is a nonprofit organization that partners with the city to provide services, programs and strategic leadership for the downtown district. Its work supports economic development, place-making and a vibrant and inclusive community.

editor@smdp.com

this season. At Shutters on the Beach, beloved fine dining destination 1 Pico will offer a three course prix fixe dinner for seventy five dollars per person, celebrating coastal California cuisine with Southern Italian influences and panoramic views of Santa Monica Beach.

Menu highlights include Crudo di Ricciola to start, followed by entrées such as Branzino with preserved lemon herb gremolata and handmade rolled pasta layered with ricotta, mozzarella, and basil. Dessert provides a sweet finale with the Pacific Ocean as the backdrop.

"Dine LA Restaurant Week provides the perfect opportunity to go out and support the local community, explore the city's diverse culinary scene, and try some of my favorite Italian recipes at 1 Pico," said Executive Chef Vittorio Lucariello.

Rooted in California's farm to table ethos, 1 Pico blends coastal flavors with authentic Cucina Napoletana through fire grilled seafood, handmade pastas, seasonal vegetables, and a sommelier curated wine program that elevates the dining experience.

From fine dining at Citrin and neighborhood favorites like Lunetta, to bold flavors at Blue Plate Taco and backyard barbecue at Bergamot's Le Great Outdoor, Restaurant Week offers something for every palate and price point.

As Santa Monica continues to recover, reinvest, and prepare for a global spotlight ahead of major international events, Dine LA Restaurant Week stands as a reminder of the role hospitality plays in economic vitality, community connection, and cultural expression.

All restaurants participating includes: <https://www.discoverlosangeles.com/dinela>.

michelle@smdp.com

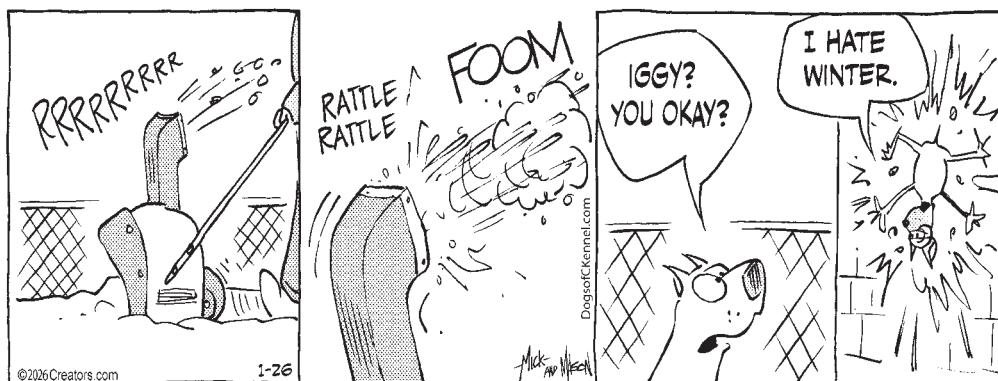
## Agnes

By TONY COCHRAN



## Dogs of C-Kennel

By MICK &amp; MASON MASTROIANNI &amp; JOHNNY HART



## Zack Hill

By JOHN DEERING &amp; JOHN NEWCOMBE

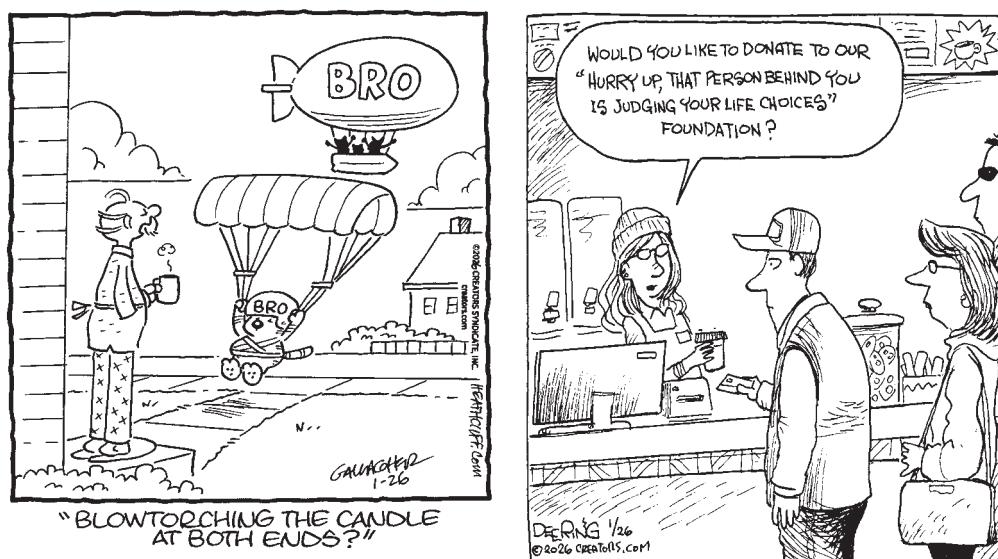


## Heathcliff

By PETER GALLAGHER

## Strange Brew

By JOHN DEERING



## FIND THE WORDS

This is a theme puzzle with the subject stated below. Find the listed words in the grid. (They may run in any direction but always in a straight line. Some letters are used more than once.) Ring each word as you find it and when you have completed the puzzle, there will be 20 letters left over. They spell out the alternative theme of the puzzle. © australianwordgames.com.au 6832

## Family fun on the Goldie



Bays	Cool	Koalas	Retreat
Beach	Dawn	Laze	Sand
Bikes	Disco	Lunch	Seagulls
Booth	Dodgems	Magic	Shade
Breeze	Entertainment	Marina	Shops
Brown	Films	Miami	Skylink
Buses	Fishing	Noosa	Surf
Cabs	Flume	Ocean	Swim
Camera	Hats	Open	Toboggan
Canals	Hotels	Party	Trip
Catch	Idle	Pass	Unit
Cliffs	Keno	Raft	

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S WORDS PUZZLE.  
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## TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 26)

Welcome to your Year of the Bold Declaration in which you simply say how it's going to be and watch the world move to make it so. You've put the work in, been generous, taken the time to learn excellence, and now you ask the world to do its part. More highlights: exciting sites, tickets and venues, holding hands in solidarity and romance, and physical feats of health and vitality. Sagittarius and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 19, 29, 42, 6 and 4.

## HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Reinvention is available, and you're willing to let go of the familiar. Even though certain beliefs about who you are feel safe - because they're known - you're brave enough to take a risk and let them go. You're more than your role - more than your story.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Your efforts to listen better give you a competitive edge. Most people don't value the skill enough to be excellent at it. It takes a calm and open mind to settle into what's being expressed. People notice and respect your talent.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Finishing what you start is a declaration of your strength. Every completed project, big or small, builds momentum. Your credibility is increasing, and so is your confidence as you honor the commitments that honor you.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). If you don't know quite what you want, at least you know what you don't want, which is the best place to start. All that you don't want is negative space, and you're the sculptor freeing the figure from everything that is not the figure.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). What appears to be an ordinary encounter has more levels. Others are unstressed because they are naive to the stakes. You're well aware. Because of your sensitivity, interactions require more of you, but they give you more, too.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You will live as the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche did, by the concept of *amor fati*, "a love of one's fate." Whatever destiny hands over, you'll polish it until it gleams. You'll be trusted with treasures of finance and heart.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Any clothing can be attractive on a confident person. However, it's difficult to feel confident if you don't like what you're wearing. Address issues of style. It's a power move.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You see your loved ones clearly, including their flaws and past mistakes, and you stay loyal. Loyalty shows up as discretion (not broadcasting their failures) and as a conscious choice to emphasize their strengths when you stand by them.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). No one knows what they are doing today. It's unclear where we're headed. There's a general sense of being uninformed; it's the same for everyone. Dive in and do what you can with what you know, and you'll soon know more.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It's easy to want something just because everyone seems to. But those wants, even when fulfilled, are somehow unfulfilling. That's why you seek deeper knowledge. Ask your true wants to speak a little louder to you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). A good lawyer does not present all the information he has about his client during the opening statement. And nor do you need to tell your whole story immediately. You already have the attention, so you can be deliberate with your pacing.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). A lot of simple improvements don't happen because no one thinks to make them happen. But you're always looking around for opportunities to help. You'll see what needs fixing and move things in a better, brighter direction.

## SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD



## Newsday Crossword

THROW IT OUT THERE by Doug Peterson  
Edited by Stanley Newman  
www.stanxwords.com

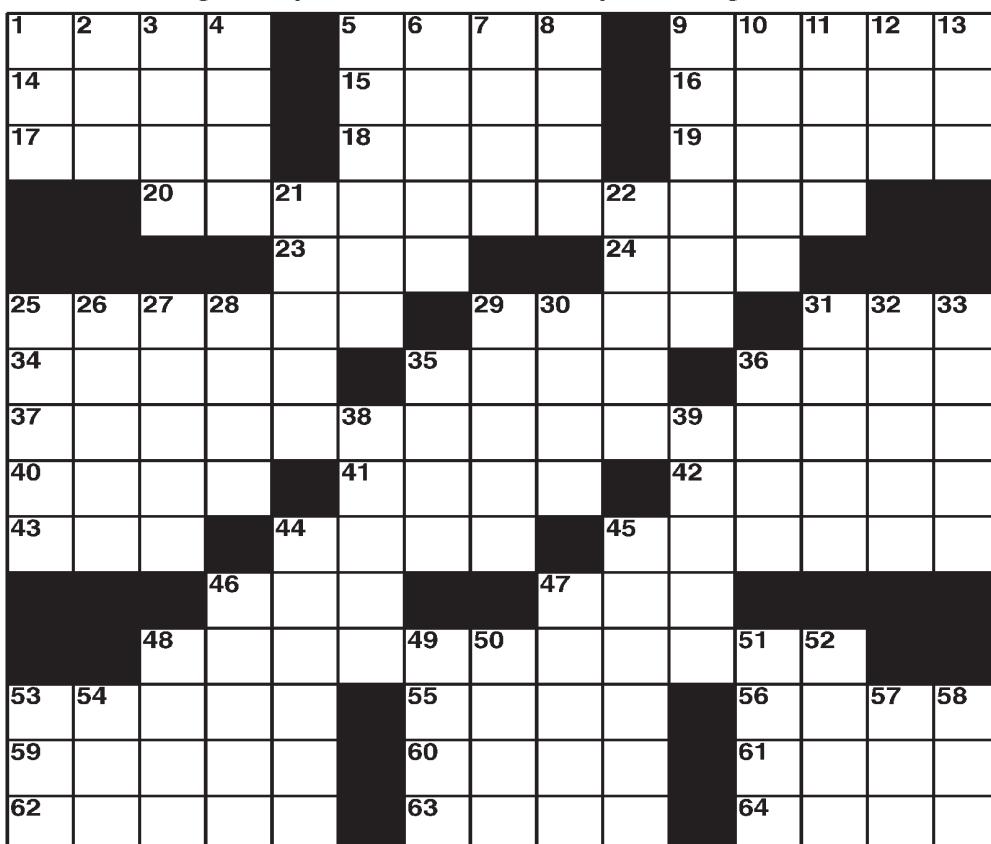
## ACROSS

1 Rolling stone's supposed lack  
5 Diplomatic treaty  
9 Cleaned with a broom  
14 Sport on horseback  
15 Legal rights group: Abbr.  
16 Military priest  
17 Horse's foot  
18 Deliberately avoid  
19 Pungent slice on a burger  
20 Office container for crumpled paper  
23 "Absolutely!"  
24 Showed the way  
25 Is unable to decide  
29 Competes  
31 PC's "cancel" key  
34 Suspect's story  
35 Noun or adverb  
36 Hunter's clothing pattern, for short  
37 Appliance that grinds up food scraps  
40 Flightless Aussie birds  
41 Boats like Noah's  
42 Vote into office  
43 Ship's distress signal  
44 "Not guilty," for one  
45 Pieces of celery  
46 Bikini top  
47 "He said, \_\_ said"  
48 Beach's large refuse container  
53 Go off the path  
55 Strong craving  
56 Conceited  
59 No longer asleep  
60 Wasn't truthful  
61 Engrave with acid

## DOWN

62 Sulked  
63 Not as much  
64 Fishing rod's spool  
1 Speedometer reading: Abbr.  
2 Winning tic-tac-toe line  
3 Far from speedy  
4 Couch in a den  
5 Attaches with adhesive  
6 Has sore muscles  
7 Golfer's putter or driver  
8 \_\_ fish sandwich  
9 Wires on a bike wheel  
10 Decreased gradually  
14 Showed the way  
15 Is unable to decide  
16 Hunter's clothing pattern, for short  
17 Appliance that grinds up food scraps  
18 Beach's large refuse container  
19 Conceited  
20 Strong craving  
21 "Not guilty," for one  
22 Vehicles coasting on snow  
25 Boats like Noah's  
26 Deliberately avoid  
27 Computer "infection"  
28 Flow back, as the tide  
29 Liquor in a screwdriver  
30 Colored part of the eye  
31 Artist's painting stand  
32 Kiss loudly  
33 Young male horses  
35 "Those \_\_ the days!"

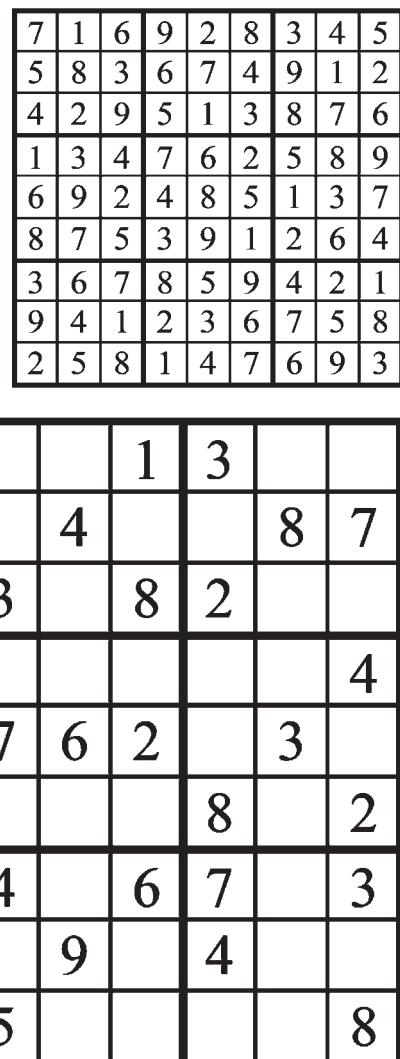
36 Pepsi or Coke  
38 Fancy parties  
39 \_\_ Pan (Neverland flyer)  
44 Said grace, for example  
45 Rips into tiny pieces  
46 Pedal that stops a car  
47 Wise people  
48 Mouse-catching device  
49 Ship's framework  
50 Soft French cheese  
51 At any time  
52 Not on time  
53 America's "uncle"  
54 A pair of  
57 Skating rink surface  
58 Group with expert goalies: Abbr.



## Sudoku

## SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column, and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle.



MORE OF STAN'S CROSSWORD! Play FREE from Stan's archives of Easy, Hard and Sunday puzzles at: [tinyurl.com/stan-newman-crosswords](http://tinyurl.com/stan-newman-crosswords)



## MONDAY | JANUARY 26

### PIZZA PARTY AT BODEGA WINE BAR

6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. 814 Broadway Santa Monica. Every Monday Night at Bodega, every bottle of wine you purchase gets you a pizza half off! 6pm-Close. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/pizza-party-at-bodega-wine-bar/11526040/2026-01-26T18>

### FINTECH STARTUPS, INVESTORS & PROFESSIONALS NETWORKING MIXER LA

7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. 11780 W Pico Blvd Neat.LA, 11780 West Pico Boulevard Los Angeles. Get ready to mix, mingle, and make connections with LA's top FinTech innovators and game-changers! Visit: Get ready to mix, mingle, and make connections with LA's top FinTech innovators and game-changers! Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/fintech-startups-investors-professionals-networking-mixer-la/17765002/2026-01-26T19>

### PURR - A ROOFTOP PARTY FOR THE GIRLS AT SOMEWHERE SPECIAL

8:00 p.m. Ace Hotel Los Angeles 929 S Broadway, Los Angeles. PURR is a rooftop party curated by Not Staying In, an all girls city girl escape created by women for women. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/purr-a-rooftop-party-for-the-girls-at-somewhere-special/17856064/2026-01-26T20>

## TUESDAY | JANUARY 27

### MEMORIES & MOVEMENT SENIOR CLUB

10:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Virginia Avenue Park 2200 Virginia Ave. Santa Monica. Come, learn, and have fun every 2nd and 4th Tuesday from 10:30 AM to 1:00 PM in The Patio room at Virginia Avenue Park. Each week there will be something new: Exercise, Talking with Friends, Learning, Guest Presenters, Health & Wellness! For more information call (310) 458-8688. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/memories-movement-senior-club/14853634/2026-01-13T10>

### WALK-IN TUTORING WITH LAURIE

2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. West Los Angeles Regional Library 11360 Santa Monica Boulevard Los Angeles. Walk-In Tutoring With Laurie Walk-in tutoring is available for any adult who needs help with internet searches, filling out forms, English conversation, reading, writing, resumes, and applications, studying for. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/walk-in-tutoring-with-laurie/17128550/2026-01-27T14>

### CITY COUNCIL MEETING

5:30 p.m. Santa Monica City Hall 1685 Main St. Santa Monica. The City Council is made up of seven members elected at-large for staggered four-year terms. Every two years, after each election, the City Council selects one of its members to serve as Mayor and another to serve as Mayor Pro

Tempore. The City Council also sits as the following bodies for the City of Santa Monica. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/city-council-meeting/13799967/2026-01-27T17>

### MOOD & MINDFULNESS FLOWER ARRANGING WORKSHOP

6:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Viola Floral Studios 1639 11th St. Suite 162 Santa Monica. Slow down and savor the season. This wellness-forward workshop blends floral arranging with mindful practices to create soothing, intentional designs in warm autumn tones. Perfect for those wanting to take a break from the hustle of the holiday season, or simply enjoy the wellness benefits of flowers in a tranquil setting. Ten percent of the ticket price will be donated to the Fondle Project. The Fondle Project is a nonprofit dedicated to empowering women through breast health awareness, self-advocacy, and direct support for breast cancer patients. Through engaging events and resources, we inspire women to "know their normal" and prioritize their wellness every day. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/mood-mindfulness-flower-arranging-workshop/17600684/2026-01-27T18>

### CONFessions OF A VOTING REFORMER - A TALK WITH THE EQUAL VOTE COALITION

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. UnUrban Coffee House 3301 Pico Boulevard Santa Monica. A conversation on election reform with Sara Wolk, Executive Director of the Equal Vote Coalition. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/confessions-of-a-voting-reformer-a-talk-with-the-equal-vote-coalition/17765011/2026-01-27T19>

### 8PM FREE "ROXY'S GOT BALLS" BINGO TUESDAYS @ TINY'S HI-DIVE IN LOS ANGELES!

8:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. Tiny's Hi-Dive 12012 West Pico Boulevard Los Angeles. 8pm TUESDAYS "Roxy's Got Balls!" Drag Queen BINGO is LIVE & FREE at Tiny's Hi-Dive in Los Angeles w/ Roxy Wood! Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/8pm-free-roxy-s-got-balls-bingo-tuesdays-tiny-s-hi-dive-in-los-angeles-/14857154/2026-01-27T20>

### TUESDAY OPEN MIC

10:00 p.m. Westside Comedy Theater 1323-A 3rd St Santa Monica. The best open mic in Los Angeles! The Tuesday Open Mic is a weekly open mic. Hop onstage and perform your best 3 minutes! Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/tuesday-open-mic/16004734/2026-01-13T22>

## WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 28

### DOWNTOWN FARMERS MARKET - WEDNESDAY MARKET

8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Downtown Santa Monica Arizona Avenue (Between 4th & Ocean) Santa Monica. One of the largest grower-only Certified Farmers Market in Southern California and a favorite for local chefs! Enjoy one of Santa Monica's farmers markets, widely

considered to be among the best on the west coast and featuring field-fresh produce, hundreds of kinds of vegetables, brilliant cut flowers, breads, cheeses, and more. Downtown Farmers Market Locations: Wednesdays at Arizona Ave & 2nd St and Saturdays at Arizona & 3rd St. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/downtown-farmers-market-wednesday-market/12382446/2026-01-14T08>

### FLORAL DESIGN 101 MASTERCLASS

9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Viola Floral Studios 1639 11th St. Suite 162 Santa Monica. Calling all budding florists, event planners and creatives/hobbyists! Join us for a Floral Design 101 Masterclass! This comprehensive one-day workshop blends hands-on floral design with foundational skills, perfect for beginners or those looking to refine their craft, grow their hosting toolkit, or explore a career as a florist. This comprehensive one-day workshop blends hands-on floral design with foundational skills, perfect for beginners or those looking to refine their craft, grow their hosting toolkit, or explore a career as a florist. Space is limited to 8 people, and early booking is encouraged. Choose from two dates above. What to Expect: Master the art of flower design: you'll design two arrangements to keep and receive personalized feedback. Learn the essential tools and design techniques for professional floral design, including the use of floral tape, wire and Oasis foam. \$575.00. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/floral-design-101-masterclass/17600937/2026-01-28T09>

### STAR STORIES WITH PAM

12:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. West Los Angeles Regional Library 11360 Santa Monica Boulevard Los Angeles. STAR Stories With Pam Children are invited to share the joy of storytelling and reading with our special STAR volunteer, Pam. Come three times and take home a free book. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/star-stories-with-pam/15607289/2026-01-14T12>

### FRiENDS OF VENICE LIBRARY: YOGA FOR EVERYONE!

12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. Venice Branch Library 501 S Venice Blvd. Venice. Through body awareness, movement, and breath, you will be guided on how to bring your body, mind, and spirit back into balance for overall well-being. All levels are welcome. Generously funded by Friends of Venice Library. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/friends-of-venice-library-yoga-for-everyone-/17751141/2026-01-14T12>

## THURSDAY | JANUARY 29

### CLUB LATINO PARA ADULTOS MAYORES

11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Virginia Avenue Park 2200 Virginia Ave. Santa Monica. Venga, aprenda, y diviertase cada jueves de 11 AM a 1 PM el el salón 3 del parque Virginia. Cada semana será algo nuevo: Ejercicio, Hablando con amigos, Aprendizaje, Presentadores Invitados, Salud y Bienestar. Hay

comida para los adultos mayores que participan durante las dos horas. Para más información llame al (310) 458-8688. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/club-latino-para-adultos-mayores/13943928/2026-01-08T11>

### OAKWOOD ROOTS FARMERS AND WELLNESS MARKET

11:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. 685 Westminster Ave Venice. Oakwood Roots Venice Farmers' and Wellness Market is a hub for local foods, wellness classes, and holistic healing. We are dedicated to fostering a strong community, supporting local businesses, and advocating for sustainable practices. Join us in creating a healthier and more connected neighborhood. This is part of a larger effort to revitalize the abandoned parking lots across the street from the park into a community hub, in partnership with Community Corporation of Santa Monica and Hoopbus. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/oakwood-roots-farmers-and-wellness-market/14548473/2026-01-22T11>

### LA TECH 2026

6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. LouLou Santa Monica 395 Santa Monica Place Santa Monica. Come hang out with tech professionals in LA, make connections, and have a great time at our LA Tech Networking Mixer! Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/la-tech-2026/17765030/2026-01-29T18>

## FRIDAY | JANUARY 30

### DRUNK THEATRE: THE WILDEST IMPROV COMEDY SHOW!

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Santa Monica Playhouse 1211 4th St, Santa Monica. A comedian takes five shots of whiskey in a row and tries to perform an improvised play with five sober comedians. What could go wrong?! Drunk Theatre is the entirely improvised, unpredictable, and crazy comedy show that'll kick your weekend into overdrive. Reserve your spot now as limited seating and space is available. Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/drunk-theatre-the-wildest-improv-comedy-show-/15793351/2026-01-09T08>

### THE NDA SHOW

8:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m. The Crow 2525 Michigan Avenue #Unit F4 Santa Monica. The NDA Show is a night of comedy about the nightmares and miracles that can happen while working in film and TV production. Visit: [https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/the\\_nda\\_show/17765051/2026-01-30T20](https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/the_nda_show/17765051/2026-01-30T20)

### THE FRIDAY SHOW (STAND-UP COMEDY)

8:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. Westside Comedy Theater 1323-A 3rd St Santa Monica. Catch top comics and national headliners Friday nights at Westside Comedy Theater. Nonstop laughs and fun- You don't want to miss it! Visit: <https://www.smdp.com/calendar/#/details/the-friday-show-stand-up-comedy-/17765194/2026-01-30T20>

# Keep our parks clean



City of  
**Santa  
Monica**

**Recycle your cans and bottles for a cash refund  
at a recycling center or put them in your blue bin.**

