

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

5, 11, 23, 35, 37

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 9, 1, 4

Evening picks: 5, 4, 6

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 12, Lucky Charms

2nd Place: 5, California Classic

3rd Place: 10, Solid Gold

Race Time: 1:43.59



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Mile High Outfitters, a back-country expedition organizer in Challis, Idaho, has petitioned the U.S. Forest Service for permission to install three commercial, recreational hot tubs smack in the middle of an unspoiled wilderness area, and the service is now considering the proposal (the public comment period having ended early this month). Each tub would require 1,250 gallons of water, heated by wood-burning stove, replenished every three days in-season, even though motorized vehicles to bring the water in are not now permitted.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If they can put one man on the moon, can't they put them all there?"

— Unknown



INDEX

Horoscopes

Step back, Capricorn 2



Local

Drawing a crowd 3



Opinion

Council says talk to the hand 6



Entertainment

Sap oozes from 'Jersey' 8



National

Abe ascending 10



International

Palestinian plea for peace 11

Sign of things to come



Nicky Five Aces/Special to the Daily Press

Workers hang a sign for Santa Monica's newest big electronic retailer. The Circuit City outlet will open in a few weeks downtown, at the corner of Fourth Street and Arizona Avenue.

Dead body discovered on coast of SM beach

By Daily Press staff

SANTA MONICA BEACH — The lifeless body of a woman was discovered near the water line along the beach Thursday afternoon.

Described by police as that of a "female, Black adult," the unidentified corpse will undergo an autopsy by the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office in attempts to determine the cause of death.

Santa Monica Police responded to the 900 block of the beach regarding a death investigation shortly after 1 p.m. on Thursday.

Anyone with further information is asked to contact the police department at (310) 458-8491.

City Hall charting its course for future

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — Long heralded — and criticized — as a bastion of progressive liberal ideals, City Hall strengthened its commitment to environmentalism this week with the creation of a special task force to help plot the evolution of Santa Monica.

The 11-member task force is charged with implementing City Hall's "sustainable city plan," which governs the growth of Santa Monica on manifold fronts — from resource conservation and transportation to housing, education and human dignity.

"Our sustainable city plan is a long-term greenprint for quality of life, building environmental excellence, social equity and economic success," said Santa Monica City Councilman Kevin McKeown, a local Green Party leader and environmentalist. "I very much look forward to the progress we'll enjoy, and to working with the new task force."

"At the staff level, we have some ideas about how this plan is implemented — so that it does happen, so that it's not just some document that sits on a shelf."

— CRAIG PERKINS

Director,

Environmental and Public Works Dept.

McKeown called the extensive community interest in the plan humbling and heartwarming, adding the task force is of a quality comparable to a federal-level commission.

Thirty-three people applied for the 11 current positions on the task force. Officials culled from a range of expertise

See CITY PLAN, page 4

Council: Park it right here

By Daily Press staff

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — Finding a parking spot near Santa Monica High School just got a little easier — for residents.

More than 60 spots on the east side of Ninth Street between Michigan Avenue and Pico Boulevard were set aside for residents this week. Previously, residents shared the spots with students and local businesses, although surrounding streets were restricted for residents only.

Students, businesses and other visitors can still park on the street, but only for

two hours at a time and only between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. — the same rules that apply to other streets in the neighborhood.

Samohi students rallied last month before the City Council for more parking spaces, but council members decided against raising a planned parking structure across from the school by one level, instead directing the students to take their message to the local school board. The school of 3,400 offers only 40 parking spaces to its seniors, and none to lowerclassmen.

See PARKING, page 5

Coast watchers claim state needs serious stress relief

BY JIM WASSERMAN

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — A decades-long explosion of coastal development combined with California's rapid population growth is significantly stressing a Pacific Ocean that must absorb sewage, chemicals, oil runoff and a host of other destructive influences, members of the Pew Oceans Commission told state lawmakers Wednesday.

The experts, representing an 18-member

commission that reported on the nation's oceans last June, cited California's growth for wiping out 90 percent of its coastal wetlands, closing polluted beaches and decimating fish populations.

"The question is are we going to allow that same kind of crisis, that same kind of collapse to happen again and again and again?" asked Leon Panetta, the commission chairman and former congressman,

See OCEAN, page 5

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It's fun and games, Aquarius



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

The stars show the kind of day you'll have:

★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average
★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ What seems like a piece of cake becomes a lot more difficult as the day progresses. You might feel like someone is putting an obstacle in your path. Benefit from this slow-down, and rethink your plans. Use negatives to your benefit. Tonight: Christen the weekend with your pals.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★ Expenses soar, but you might have difficulty knowing which way to go. You want to indulge a loved one. You want to take a risk. Slow down for your own sake and do some thinking. Nothing needs to be done immediately. Tonight: Discuss this idea with a trusted pal.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ With the Moon gracing your energy and giving you that extra magnetism, you might have a difficult time saying no to something you want. Eye long-term considerations, and you'll feel much better as a result. Tonight: You call the shots.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★ Do nothing, especially if you feel like an idea could be compromised. Realize that sometimes you need to let situations play themselves out. Now is just that type of occasion. Don't hold grudges; make a call. Both of you will feel better. Tonight: Do your thing.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Friends surround you, as usual. Meetings prove to be profitable. Don't be surprised if a loved one reacts strongly. In fact, you might be taken aback by the strength of his or her words or actions. Make special plans with this person. Tonight: TGIF.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★ Bosses and those in charge push much harder than you would like. Consider an open rebellion, but know when you need to put a halt to this demonstration. After all, you know the lay of the land. You can only go so far. Tonight: Work as late as necessary.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ You bounce with ideas. Remember, just because something feels good to you, doesn't mean it does to another person. A boss or older relative is being demanding. You aren't going to change him or her. Find someone more playful. Tonight: Act like a kid again.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ You have a very strong manner, which sometimes elicits strong reactions from others. A partner is there for you, even if you have a disagreement. Let it go and avoid power plays of any kind. Remember, love the one you're with. Tonight: Spice up your love life.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Kick back again and see what others have up their sleeves. A partner could be quite frustrated with the present state of finances. Talks must happen if you value this person. Your instincts will tell you what to do. Tonight: Among the crowds.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★ Make up for another person's slowness. He or she just might not be up to snuff. Know that what you are doing is appreciated. You might not hear the words, but you will see the reaction. Right now, don't worry about picking up the tab. Tonight: Don't push yourself or anyone else.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ You are very playful, innovative and in the spirit for the weekend. The problem might be an associate who has a bad case of the blahs. Use your imagination, but don't push others. Be a role model. Teach others how to have fun. Tonight: Let your imagination lead.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★ Your laughter might be misunderstood by a loved one or child who is a bit oversensitive. Walk in this person's shoes. Perhaps indulging this person could help. Give yourself permission to break the bank once in a while. Tonight: Head home.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Legend in the hall: Hopkins earns philanthropic award

By Daily Press staff



Sir Anthony Hopkins

Academy Award-winning actor Anthony Hopkins will be honored as the 2004 Caritas Award recipient on May 21 at the Saint John's Health Center Caritas Award Gala.

The annual black-tie event, which benefits the emergency Department of the Santa Monica-based hospital, will begin at 7 p.m. at the Regent Beverly Wilshire in Beverly Hills.

"Anthony Hopkins has been a very dear friend and longtime supporter of Saint John's, so we are particularly pleased to be able to honor him at this event," says Sister Marie Madeleine, president of Saint John's Health Center. "In addition, we are delighted to present the first Spirit of Saint John's Award this year to another special individual, Dr. Ruben F. Mettler, who has always given so much of his time and commitment to the health center."

Hopkins, who won an Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in "Silence of the Lambs," has appeared in nearly 90 films for the large screen and television, and more than 20 stage productions in the United States and England, where he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1993. He also has received multiple Emmy and BAFTA Awards.

A U.S. citizen since 2000, Hopkins is an active volunteer and philanthropist within the theatre world and his community. Within the last year, he has worked with an extensive array of organizations, donating his time, name and resources to such groups as The Hope Center Clinic, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Screen Smart Set/Motion Picture Television Fund, Motion Picture Mothers Association, Juvenile Diabetes Research International Foundation, The Angel Guardian Foundation and Vital Ground.

Mettler, the retired chairman and CEO of TRW, Inc., is a past member of the Saint John's Health Center Board and is active on the Foundation Board of Trustees. Following the 1994 Northridge earthquake, Mettler also served as co-chair of the capital campaign to rebuild Saint John's Health Center, which was severely damaged by the quake.

The Caritas Award Gala is hosted by the Saint John's Health Center Foundation and the Irene Dunne Guild, a support group of the hospital. This year's event is chaired by Santa Monica resident Su-z Schneider, a member of the Irene Dunne Guild.

With a membership of 90 women, the Irene Dunne Guild provides a variety of volunteer services and philanthropic support to Saint John's, including the "Angels of the ER" program to provide non-medical assistance to emergency room patients and their families. The year-round program is staffed by guild members and community volunteers.

Tickets to the 2004 Caritas Award Gala are \$375 each. For more information call Saint John's Health Center Foundation at (310) 829-8424.

Digifest looks to draw a crowd

By Daily Press staff

The new era of digital animation has buried its roots on local turf.

The Academy of Entertainment and Technology at Santa Monica College has been widely praised for its programs, officials said. On April 9, the school will present Digifest 2004, a half-day animation-digital video-interactive festival showcasing student work.

The event will be held from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. followed by a 7:30 p.m. screening and reception at the Academy of Entertainment and Technology, 1660 Stewart St. The event is free, and free parking is available.

Tours of the academy will be given from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., and an open house, with a presentation of animation and interactive work, will be held from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

"We're excited to showcase the incredible work of our students in computer animation, motion graphics and interactive design," said Katharine Muller, dean of the academy. "Because we work so closely with the entertainment industry, we are able to train our students in the latest techniques using state-of-the-art technology. Our students go on to high-paying careers in such companies as DreamWorks, Digital Domain, Rhythm & Hues, Sony Computer Entertainment, Sony Pictures Digital Entertainment and Warner Bros."

The Academy of Entertainment & Technology, founded in 1997, trains students in the digital and traditional arts, including character animation and interactive media.

For further information, call (310) 434-3700.

surf report

Look for a mix NW wind and ground swell that will slowly fade through the afternoon today, along with building S swell. Many of the better exposed NW combo breaks see chest-high surf.

OUTLOOK: Look for the NW swell to back off further on Saturday although the good spots still have fun 3'-4' waves, while stand-out breaks hit head-high.

Write us at wood@smdp.com and tell us what the surf is doing today at your local break.

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	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	2:38	0.6	3:03	-0.4	8:40	5.5	9:16	5.1
SUNDAY	3:15	0.3	3:28	0.1	9:18	5.1	9:41	5.2
MONDAY	3:53	0.2	3:52	0.6	9:55	4.6	10:04	5.2
TUESDAY	4:30	0.3	4:13	1.1	10:34	4.1	10:28	5.1
WEDNESDAY	5:11	0.4	4:31	1.6	11:17	3.5	10:53	4.9
THURSDAY	5:59	0.6	4:43	2.1	12:12	3.0	11:21	4.7
FRIDAY	7:03	0.8	4:28	2.5	1:56	2.6	11:57	4.4

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The Q Line

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom recently made national and international headlines by defying state law to issue marriage licenses to gay couples. Newsom said he feels it's a constitutional right for gays to marry.

But some politicians at the state and federal level see things differently. With a hold on marriage licenses for gay couples in San Francisco ongoing and the same debate raging in communities across the United States, Pres. George W. Bush has made it clear that he doesn't

support gay marriages.

Pundits and moral crusaders alike see the hot-button issue shaping up to be a key debate in the 2004 presidential election. So, this week Q-Line wants to know, "Should gay couples be afforded the right to marry? Why or why not?"

Call (310) 285-8106 with your response before Friday at 5 p.m. We'll print them in the weekend edition. Please limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.



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LOCAL

Sustainable city plan was first adopted in 1994

CITY PLAN, from page 1

and backgrounds — including university professors, lawyers, building and land-use consultants, and members of the local chamber of commerce (see sidebar). Task force members have committed to serving for five years.

What exact form the task force's involvement will take is unclear. The group will meet in coming weeks to decide when, where and how often to meet. Their stated goal is to adopt a plan for implementing the sustainable city plan by March of 2005.

A group of 15-20 City Hall staffers have met a handful of times to discuss the same issue, said Craig Perkins, director of the environmental and public works department. Perkins said it's a critical time for the city's sustainable city plan because there are so many unanswered questions and different issues for the task force to focus on.

"At the staff level, we have some ideas about how this plan is implemented — so

that it does happen, so that it's not just some document that sits on a shelf," Perkins said.

Fulfilling the sustainable city plan likely will require ongoing efforts to reach out to and educate business and resident groups, among others, while changing some of administrative procedures in City Hall and even drafting some new ordinances, Perkins said. The bottom line, he added, is it's about preserving, protecting and sustaining Santa Monica.

"It's a very broad, comprehensive attempt to chart this course for the future. There are a lot of blanks that need to be filled in, and that's why this board is going to be called upon to help," Perkins said.

For the plan to succeed, Perkins added, "everybody — every resident, every business, every city employee — needs to be a participant, in the trenches, on the front line."

Adopted in 1994, City Hall's original sustainable city plan covered only four categories — resource conservation, environmental and public health, transporta-

tion, and community and economic development. In February of 2003, the City Council updated that plan, adding housing, economic development, open space and land use, human dignity, and community education and civic participation to the existing categories.

It's unclear how much money City Hall has invested in its sustainable city plan. The environmental and public works management department has 365 workers and a budget of \$56 million. Within that,

the environmental programs division has 12 workers and a budget of \$3.4 million. But Perkins said it's difficult to quantify how much time or money has gone into the plan because workers from outside his department also have worked on it.

Plus, it's a misnomer to call it an expense, he added.

"Basically, the cost of doing it is what city staff should be doing anyway — and it actually makes our operations more effective," Perkins said.

Force of 11

The new sustainable city task force is made up of 11 people that either work or live in Santa Monica. They represent a wide range of expertise.

■ Genevieve Bertone is an account executive for the Sustainable Works Greening Program, who also works with the environmental affairs committee of the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce. Her expertise is in environmental policy and business.

■ Euripedes De Oliveira, a professor at California State University Northridge in the department of Urban Studies and Planning, has expertise in planning, housing and business.

■ Christina Erickson is a "green" building consultant, business consultant and attorney. Her expertise is in planning, environmental policy and business.

■ Sandy Grant is a project manager and facilitator. She is a member of the City Hall's task force on the environment, which until Tuesday was the key board overseeing the sustainable city plan. Grants is also a community representative to the Santa Monica College environmental affairs committee and member of the Ocean Park Community Organization. Her expertise is in planning, environmental policy, education, business and neighborhood issues.

■ Roe Johnston, a science teacher at Lincoln Middle School, has expertise in environmental policy and education.

■ Leonard Mitchell is executive director of

the USC Center for Economic Development and the National Center for Eco-Industrial Development, and a licensed attorney. His expertise is in planning, housing, environmental policy, education and business.

■ Terry O'Day is chief operating officer of Environment Now, an environmental foundation, and a small business owner. He is also member of the Santa Monica Planning Commission. His expertise is in planning, housing, environmental policy, education and business.

■ Mark Olson, regional manager for Southern California Edison, is a Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce board member and co-chair of the environmental affairs committee. His expertise is in environmental policy and business.

■ Jim Ries is a land-use consultant and board member of the Pico Neighborhood Association. His expertise is in planning and neighborhood issues.

■ Jennifer Wolch, a professor of geography and urban planning, is founding director of the USC Center for Sustainable Cities. She is also a member of the Santa Monica recreation and parks commission. Her expertise is in planning, recreation and parks, social services and environmental policy.

■ Dennis Woods is transportation planner for the city of West Hollywood. He is also executive board member of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3339 and an active member of the Borderline Neighborhood Group. His expertise is in planning, environmental policy, labor and neighborhood issues.

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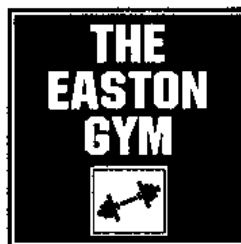
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Positively Ninth St: Residents now in the zone

PARKING, from page 1

Tuesday's decision to restrict Ninth Street comes amid a hot debate over "preferential parking zones." Some officials say public streets shouldn't be restricted. Others say residents deserve relief.

The decision also follows a two-year-long crusade by local resident Christian Boyce to restrict parking on both sides of the street. Boyce said the hand-picked restrictions made his street a dumping lot.

"This shows what perseverance can do," Boyce remarked on Thursday, "that you don't have to just lay there and take it. What made them (Council) think that they could apply the rules differently here than they did anywhere else?"

Armed with his own research on parking trends in the neighborhood, as well as photographs and home video recordings of the snarled morning parking situation, Boyce enlisted the support of his neigh-

bors, knocked on doors at City Hall and showered politicians and local media outlets with letters.

Boyce, who has rented his apartment on Ninth Street for more than 15 years, argued the only way to remedy the nerve-racking parking situation was to extend the permitted parking to both sides of the thoroughfare.

"It's a very fair, very reasonable (parking) restriction that would work in any residential neighborhood," said a gratified Boyce. "What we got was sensible — now every street is the same, both sides of the street are the same."

Still, City Hall staffers resisted. They said those cars had to go somewhere, and finding a place for them was a challenge. Lucy Dyke, City Hall's transportation planning manager, said the cars that fight for free spots on Ninth Street probably would move to streets west of Lincoln Boulevard. And because City Hall cannot

introduce any more permitted parking areas there, residents would have no recourse to fight against the influx.

City Hall is barred from creating any permitted zones in that area because it's controlled by the Coastal Commission. The Coastal Commission oversees everything west of Lincoln Boulevard that is situated south of Pico Boulevard.

In the end, members of the City Council voted 6-1 to expand the preferential parking zone. City Councilman Ken Genser said it was an untenable situation for residents — and one caused by City Hall, when the smaller preferential parking zone was implemented two years ago.

City Councilwoman Pam O'Connor voted against the zone, and while he voted for it, City Councilman Herb Katz said he was opposed to the idea of restricting any other parking areas in the future.

— John Wood

State of the oceans report faults California's growth

OCEAN, from page 1

citing the 1950s disappearance of sardines from his native Monterey Peninsula.

The oceans commission is a \$5.5 million project of Philadelphia-based Pew Charitable Trusts, the \$4.1 billion foundation of one of the founders of Sun Oil Co., now Sunoco.

"The oceans are in peril and we know why that is," Stanford University professor Stephen Palumbi told lawmakers. "The oceans have really experienced an industrial revolution in the last 50 years. Huge cargo ships, oil and gas platforms and huge sewer pipes. No longer is the ocean a huge impenetrable vast place."

Half Moon Bay fisherman Pietro Parravano, a commission member, argued that laws that presided over collapse of fish populations and loss of wetlands need updating.

"We are continuing with the very policies that facilitated this collapse," he said.

Noting that the number of commercial fishing boats in California has fallen by half since the mid-1970s, Parravano said, "I don't think the number of boats is the issue. You're starting to see major pollu-

tion damage to the ecosystems that are affecting the ocean. We've lost 90 percent of our wetlands, and wetlands are a critical nursery area for 75 percent of all marine species. You break the link in that life cycle and you can keep fishermen off the water for 30 years."

Nationwide, more than half the population lives near the coast. In California an estimated 70 percent to 80 percent of people live within 30 miles of the ocean.

Panetta and others, including top officials of the Schwarzenegger administration, called for new governing approaches and better state coordination of ocean policies in a state of 35.3 million people.

Speakers also suggested buying more coast land to prevent development, slowing development on remaining coastal properties and curbing pollution that comes from distant inland zones, including runoff from farms.

The hearing, before the Assembly Select Committee on Coastal Protection, came as lawmakers consider two Senate bills to create a Cabinet-level ocean protection council within state government and use state bonds to buy coastal fishing boats and retire licenses.

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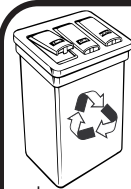
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April 7th: Yikes

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LETTERS

No butts about it

Editor:

Congratulations to the City Council on passing the smoking ban (SMDP, March 25, page 1). It takes real courage to stand up for the rights of people not to be infected by secondhand smoke — not to mention the disgusting litter associated with public smoking. Let's hope the "smoking area" on the pier is tucked far and away from where families are likely to be present.

When I first moved to Santa Monica, I had looked forward to enjoying walks and runs on the beach. I quickly learned that I could not enjoy the sensation of sand between my toes without the grotesque experience of occasionally rubbing my feet against cigarette butts recently plucked and discarded from the mouth of some anonymous smoker. I understand that trying to find a location for a summer beach blanket not adjacent to smokers on an otherwise nice summer day can be a frustrating challenge.

To Councilpersons Feinstein and O'Connor, I can only wonder about the motivation and rationale for being recently opposed to laws designed to protect Santa Monicans (and our hundreds of thousands of guests) both from unreasonable noise and from smoke and litter on our beaches and piers. It's good to know that at least a majority of our current council is committed to promoting, and not denigrating, the quality of life in the city.

Dan Stuart
Santa Monica

City needs to get own house in order

Editor:

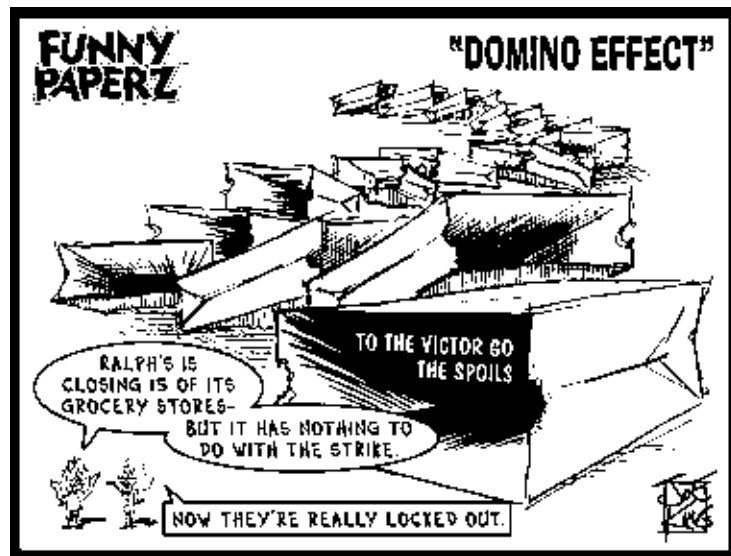
I understand the City of Santa Monica is now suing the federal government because the city claims the federal government allows emissions that contribute to a phenomenon it refers to as global warming. I only hope the city has better luck than it did when it wasted all that money suing over ATM fees and then lost.

Maybe the city of Santa Monica should first take a look at its own house, because I'd like to know if all of that hot air coming out of City Hall is responsible for this

global warming trend.

Now the city has banned smoking at the beach, after having banned smoking in public parks last year. As a non-smoking mother with two small children, my immediate concern is not over smoking in the parks or beaches, but the homeless who litter those areas — sleeping, urinating, defecating, drinking and in general making our beaches and parks unsuitable for use by our children.

See LETTERS, page 7



Members: ALEC, NCS, SCS, SCS

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New codes need work, but Council won't hear of it



MY WRITE

By Bill Bauer

In the next few weeks, the City Council will decide on revisions to city zoning codes that could alter every multi-family neighborhood in Santa Monica, forever. One big red flag is the elimination of public comment on the future of our neighborhoods.

Proposed text amendments would permanently define new building standards for downtown and multi-family residential neighborhoods throughout the city. Amendments will permanently update and change city codes, and replace numerous interim codes expiring in June.

According to city staff, the new design and development guidelines for downtown are designed to "represent community values with respect to design, quality and livability and create clearer standards while achieving a more efficient and predictable review process for applicants (developers)."

Among the standards being proposed are changes in allowable building height. Depending on the project's location, some maximum heights will be lower, others will be slightly higher and five

floors will be permitted. Front and side setbacks are required on upper floors to reduce perceived size and better define a project as an individual structure. Ground floors are to be pedestrian-oriented. That's the good part.

Proposed changes mandate a courtyard connected to the sidewalk and open skyward except for projects on the Third Street Promenade. Courtyards could be residential gardens, gathering spaces or house commercial uses like restaurant dining. The problem is that if we require every new building to have a courtyard, except by variance, aren't we just creating another cookie-cutter standard?

And it gets worse.

Proposed code changes reduce the public comment threshold back to 30,000 square feet from the interim 7,500-square-foot threshold. Unfortunately, with residential components calculated at 50 percent of actual square footage, this means only the largest projects downtown would be subject to public review.

In a nutshell, "achieving a predictable review process" means that when a development meets the new codes, it would be administratively approved by staff. The need for public comment through the Architectural Review Board and Planning Commission would be substantially reduced. The ARB, for example, would only review projects that didn't meet code or that required variances or special

permits

One goal of the new codes is "limiting vehicular access ... and reducing the number of vehicles downtown will greatly enhance the quality of life and pedestrian-oriented atmosphere."

Here we go again. I can't believe City Hall is still chewing on the "get 'em out of their car" rag. You can bet the highly paid consultants and city staffers behind this gem haven't stood on a corner for 20 or 25 minutes waiting for a crowded bus.

For example, one proposal calls for narrowing Sixth and Seventh streets by 12 feet and widening the sidewalks. This dovetails with City Hall's desire to make it harder and more inconvenient to drive downtown. And, it meshes with easing parking requirements to "reduce auto dependency and parking demand ... and encourage transit, walking, bicycling and alternative modes of transportation."

In the meantime, those of us who are tired of being victims of the city's unpleasant behavior modification experiments will be patronizing Westwood, Century City and the Grove, where vehicles are welcome and parking is plentiful.

Suggested code revisions for multi-family developments in the R2, R3 and R4 residential neighborhoods propose to make condos and apartment buildings more neighborhood friendly. Yet one nightmarish recommendation requires mandatory rooftop decks that are set back

and screened from neighboring buildings.

Roof decks are consistently a major source of public complaint about noise and privacy.

And the required screening effectively adds additional height to the building. Being that they're definitely not "neighborhood friendly," mandatory roof decks should really be prohibited.

And, as with the proposed downtown standards, multi-family buildings meeting new design criteria will be exempt from public review. And affordable housing projects can still be built higher and denser than non-affordable projects.

The Planning Department views public comment as annoying, expensive and time consuming. As with the recent proposal to eliminate Conditional Use Permits for Bayside alcohol applications (also under consideration by the City Council), these latest code revisions continue an ongoing, deliberate and systematic pattern of activity that silences the public's voice.

These revisions need a great deal of City Council scrutiny. In an election year, wholesale removal of the public review will not fly nor will the implementation of poorly conceived design and development standards.

(Bill Bauer is a longtime resident of Santa Monica and a freelance writer.)

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OPINION



LETTERS

LETTERS, from page 6

Since it appears the city will be out enforcing the smoking ban, most likely by having our police write tickets to those caught smoking, I wonder if the City Council would ask our police, while they happen to be out targeting smokers, to be so kind as to enforce other laws and arrest the homeless who violate the law by sleeping, urinating, defecating, drinking and in general making our beaches and parks unsuitable for use by our children. For the sake of our children, I hope that's not too much to ask.

Katherine Marie Anderson
Santa Monica

Hey, City Council ... Duh!

Editor:

Once again, it is time for the DUH! Awards of 2004. One award goes to the entire City Council. This body of politicians get the award for their "do as we say, not as we do" attitude. The rules for City Council meetings state that council members are restricted to 10 minutes for any one agenda item.

They yak on and on like Tuesday, March 23, when it took three hours just to get permit parking debated. Yet, have a member of the public talk and their two minutes

are up. Let's police the amount of hot air coming out of your mouths, councilmembers. Another award goes to Mayor Richard Bloom. He uses the so-called "legal" agenda of a City Council meeting to give his favorite "charity" — the homeless — \$9 million for a "hotel." Yet, when he ignores the plea of parents for consistent school funding and they start to make a charter amendment for consistent funding, he says that they are making a mistake.

That, they cannot do what they want, that is not right. Sort of like the fire calling the kettle black, wouldn't you say, Mr. Mayor? Finally, an award goes to Councilman Mike Feinstein. His quote, after Tuesday's meeting — "It doesn't feel like clean, honest government." — relating to banning smoking on the beaches and pier, has to be the all-time laugh. Honest government? From him? He who won't account for \$10,000 of other people's money. (There is a dispute within Feinstein's political party over where a \$10,000 donation went after Feinstein deposited it into a personal bank account). Then you vote on a committee to stop a lawsuit against yourself? At least Councilman Kevin McKeown recuses himself on matters affecting schools at council meetings. Take a lesson and look in the mirror, Mr. Feinstein. There is dirty, unclean government. So to all of them ... DUH!

Brian Gray
Santa Monica

Ghosts of budgets past: How we got in the mess we're in

Guest
Commentary

By Sheila Kuehl

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles by State Senator Sheila Kuehl, D-Santa Monica).

To be clear, the following is not designed to advocate. Rather than argue for a point of view, I wanted to create a place to provide information generally not accessible by most people. Every day in the Capitol, there are conversations, presentations, votes and endless discussions, all of which shed light on topics people ask me about every day.

The No. 1 topic I'm asked about is the budget.

I will try, in the first few pieces, to simplify how we got into what most people are calling "the budget mess," how big the problem really is, several proposed solutions and the consequences, intended and unintended, of those proposed solutions, including the big bond (prop. 57) and balanced budget requirement (prop. 58) that were just adopted by the electorate.

As you read this, the Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger are attempting to deal not only with the current budget, but also with: The leftover results of prior budgets, brought forward as obligations; changes to the current year's budget; the adoption of the next year's budget and, often, with predictions about what decisions in the next budget will mean to future budgets.

The 2003-2004 budget totaled about \$97.4 billion, including expenditures from bond funds, federal funds, special funds — those dedicated to a particular purpose, like fees — and the general fund, which is the aggregate, mostly, of our taxes. The 2004-5 budget is projected at about \$97.2 billion.

If you count bond funds, however, and some costs required to be absorbed because some one-time savings we used in 2003-4 have expired, the new budget is more like \$100.2 billion. \$76.1 billion

of that is general fund revenues and that amount has been seriously dropping since the tech "bubble" burst. This creates a problem for the state because we have a serious over-reliance on personal income taxes for state revenue.

HISTORY AND TAXES

In 1977-78, about 5/12 of the general fund revenue came from property taxes, about 1/4 from sales and use taxes, about 1/6 from personal income taxes and 1/6 from all other taxes. By 2004-2005, after Prop. 13, tax reductions, tax credit legislation and other limitations, more than 1/4 of the revenue had to come from personal income, somewhat less than 1/4 from property taxes, a bit over 1/4 from sales and use taxes and almost 1/4 from all other. So, when personal income tanked in the state, so did the revenue side of the budget, and fairly suddenly.

HISTORY AND EXPENDITURES

In 1962-3 almost 40 percent of the budget went to kindergarten through 12th grade, about 1/8 to higher education, less than 1/4 to health and human services, a tiny slice to corrections, almost 1/5 to transportation and a little less than 1/4 to "other." By 2002-03, corrections was twice as big a slice of the pie, kindergarten through 12th grade was about the same, higher education was about the same, transportation had shrunk to more or less equal with corrections, and health and human services had grown to more than 1/4 of the budget. The growth in this latter category was due primarily to an unprecedented shrinkage in middle class jobs and more reliance by the working poor, whose numbers were growing significantly on services. I'm sure you read that Wal-Mart, for instance, pays so little, almost half of their employees qualify for Medical benefits, a state program to provide minimal healthcare for the working, indigent and disabled poor.

IN THE GOOD TIMES

In 1998-99 through 2002-03, we gave back \$3.7 billion in tax relief, spent \$4.7 billion on kindergarten through 12th grade education, \$2.4 billion on higher

education, \$4.8 billion on health, \$2.3 billion on social services and \$2 billion on all other (resources, transportation, corrections, etc.). Expansions in programs were almost exclusively in education and healthcare for the poor but these were minimal as to each individual, primarily accomplished by allowing more children to be eligible for medical services and childcare. The population needing these services had also grown, including our senior population, which is poorer and more medically vulnerable.

IN THE BAD TIMES

Employment recently plummeted in the higher paying job sectors by more than 20 percent, and, in the case of manufacturing jobs, by 25 percent. Suddenly, the revenues to the state from personal income taxes and capital gains were far less than expected. Since my colleagues in the Republican Party took an oath not to raise any taxes and, indeed, were threatened with a primary challenge if they even indicated they might consider it, the only way to balance this year's (2003-04, passed last July) budget was through cutting programs.

The problem was made worse by the fact that the cuts in the vehicle license fees, which we had made during the good times, were supposed to be restored when the general revenues sank. Actually, the vehicle license fee, which funds local police and fire services, had never gone down. These fees were still set, as they had been for decades, at 2 percent of the value of your car. Since these fees go to local governments to fund police and fire services, we had simply voted to pay a portion of your vehicle license fee out of the general fund. This is called a "backfill." Gov. Davis did not, therefore, "triple" the fee. His director of finance simply declared that there was nothing but borrowed money in the state coffers and that declaration, by law, triggered an end to the backfill. Result: You had to start paying your full vehicle license fee yourself.

CUTS

The 2003-4 budget contained over \$14 billion in cuts and when you consider the

allocation of expenditures in the budget, you can see that most of them came from healthcare for the poor and higher education. We can't cut the debt service that pays for past borrowing and bonds. We can't cut the amount we're supposed to put into certain healthcare and education programs because we would lose a far greater amount in federal funds. So it was bone and muscle, not fat, that got cut. Nevertheless, we cut.

WASTE AND FRAUD

Interestingly enough, there wasn't much. We had cut a great deal in the last three years. So when the current governor brought Donna Arduin from Florida to dig out "waste and fraud" in the state budget and therefore bring the current budget into balance, she huffed and puffed but couldn't find any. Indeed, even in her last highly touted job in Florida, her suggestions for cuts had been almost exclusively in the area of schools and healthcare.

So? Restoration of the vehicle license fee backfill from the general fund (you think of it as a cut in your fee, we think of it as unbudgeted additional money out of the general fund for police and fire) meant that we were called upon to cut more than \$2 billion extra out of this year's budget (2003-2004). You've seen the results in school budgets, you may not have seen the local clinics closing, or cuts in healthcare for the poor, but they're also there. And, in bad economic times, the need for services for those affected by job loss, aging, etc., just grows.

Next time: What lies ahead: The 2004-05 budget now under consideration and how we consider it. Future articles will address workers' comp-proposed legislation, how it will be amended, current discussions and issues; the fallout of vehicle license fee decisions, up and down; gay marriage — what's the real law about this issue here and in other states; the healthcare in California — the problem, proposed solutions, buying drugs from Canada or not; the new Medicare drug benefit and its impact on seniors — what they have now and what to expect.

Entertainment

What's playing

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

DAWN OF THE DEAD

Fans of George Romero's nightmarish horror classic won't be disappointed by this rollicking remake. Director Zack Snyder remains faithful to the original in both its satiric tone and gruesome violence.

ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF THE SPOTLESS MIND

Once in a great while a film comes along with which it's difficult to find any fault, and this is just such a movie. A quasi-surrealist gem in the spirit of Godard that will no doubt leave audiences breathless.

TAKING LIVES

The film's biggest mystery is not the identity of the killer, rather what an Academy Award-winner like Angelina Jolie is doing squandering her talent in a second-rate whodunit.

SECRET WINDOW

The great Johnny Depp is the best thing going in this otherwise run-of-the-mill suspense thriller.

SPARTAN

A hard-charging, artful thriller that takes aim at the amoral political establishment and the media that serves them.

STARSKY & HUTCH

While not quite as consistently hilarious as "Old School," the most notable gut-buster in director Todd Phillips' oeuvre, this is easily the funniest film of the year so far.

HIDALGO

Looks great and the race sequences are quite a rush, but there are far too many pace-halting interludes that aren't very original and make this already lengthy picture (141 minutes) seem a bit tedious.

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

A misguided, almost unendurable frenzy of explicit violence intended to inspire exaltation but that ultimately leads to revulsion.

TWISTED

Stinks so exquisitely that theaters should be required to hand out nostril clamps.

EUROTRIP

Vapid young American backpackers encounter virtually every played-out European stereotype in the book in this contemptible clunker.

WELCOME TO MOOSEPORT

The film, like the sleepy Maine hamlet where it's set, certainly has pastoral charm, but there just isn't much going on. Nice place to visit, but you won't want to spend two hours there.

AGAINST THE ROPES

Ryan and Epps both hang tough and deliver despite being saddled with some weak dialogue and a story that loses focus midway through.

CONFESSIONS OF A TEENAGE DRAMA QUEEN

There's no mistaking what this ridiculously predictable fairy tale is about: Promoting Lindsay Lohan's pop music career.

50 FIRST DATES

The film see-saws between laugh-out-loud-funny and downright stupid, ultimately hopping aboard the Hokey Express, with direct service to Cornball.

THE DREAMERS

Flawed, yet undeniably provocative. Even when he's missing the mark, Bertolucci's incomparable perception of the human condition is inspirational.

THE FOG OF WAR

Errol Morris may be our greatest living documentarian, and his virtuosity is on full display in this examination of former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara.

Beware the sap oozing from 'Jersey'

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

To see Kevin Smith resort to the many cornball contrivances spread throughout "Jersey Girl" — this lightweight love letter to his clan — will no doubt throw his faithful fans for a loop. But others who come in for some heart-warmin' without a predilection for the distinctly off-color, caustic tone Smith has employed to varying degrees of effectiveness in all of his earlier films should find a modicum of pleasure in the family-friendly fluff. The former will cringe during sitcom-ish scenes such as the one in which Ben Affleck gets caught canoodling with Liv Tyler in the shower by his precocious daughter, then endures a lecture from the little girl about the do's and don'ts of dating. The softies, on the other hand, will be reaching for the Kleenex when Affleck's Ollie Trinke — in the wake of his wife's death during childbirth — promises his infant that he'll be "the best daddy in the world because that's what your mommy wanted, and that's all I am now."

Pre-fatherhood, Ollie Trinke was a hotshot New York music publicist whose career obligations often intruded on his relationship with wife Gertrude (Jennifer Lopez in a deliberately



Liv Tyler and Ben Affleck star in 'Jersey Girl.'

brief appearance ... Smith apparently saw "Gigli" before editing his film). After Gertrude's death, Ollie finds it nearly impossible to juggle the demands of work with those of single parenthood, and ultimately winds up

suffering an on-the-job meltdown that gets him fired and blacklisted. So it's goodbye Manhattan, hello Highlands, New Jersey. Fast forward seven years: The best job Ollie could get is on a road maintenance crew with his crotchety but lovable old man, Bart (George Carlin), whose house he and lil' Gertie (Raquel Castro, a pint-sized J-Lo lookalike) are sharing. Though Highlands is just across the river from the Big Apple, for Ollie it seems light years from the jet-setting lifestyle he longs to live again. Not that he doesn't love being with Gertie. Who wouldn't? She's one of those impossibly cute, incredibly smart kids that are only found in movies. It's just that, well, it's a bit too early in the film for him to have figured out that he's already got all the things that really matter. Well, almost everything — so enter Maya (Tyler, who shines) a provocative video store clerk/grad student who rouses Ollie's long-dormant libido. From there, it's just a matter of time spent neck-deep in gooeyness before Ollie has to choose between — and no, I'm not kidding — going on a big job interview at a hot PR agency or attending Gertie's school play. Sniff. Some-body please pass the tissue ... and a copy of "Clerks."

(Rated PG-13 for language and sexual content including frank dialogue. Running time: 103 minutes)

Affleck on life in fast lane, post-'Bennifer'

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

If Ben Affleck is sick of talking about his personal life he didn't let it show during a recent round of interviews to promote "Jersey Girl," his latest collaboration with his long-time pal, writer-director Kevin Smith. Not only did the affable Bostonian respond to each and every invasive query about his recent break-up with Jennifer Lopez, he did so without a hint of annoyance. Perhaps the guy's a better actor than his detractors give him credit for, or maybe he realizes it won't be long before the fickle media gets distracted by another celebrity's romantic entanglements. Whatever the reason, Affleck was a good sport about the bad break, and so we promise that after this piece we'll lay off about his love life ... unless, of course, he's spotted with Britney or Paris!

QUESTION: What is it about your character, Ollie Trinke, that you identify with most?

BEN AFFLECK: What I could identify with is a guy coming from a working-class family and then moving from that world to what, for me, in my real life would be Hollywood. You know, what people would call the "fast lane." So I'm trying to reconcile, like, who am I? Am I this guy from this working-class neighborhood, or am I changed now because I've moved on to (Hollywood).

Q: Ollie's a hotshot publicist with a knack for manipulating the press. Do you think the average person is aware of just how much BS is presented as truth by the media?

BA: People can sense that there's hyperbole and spin going on in Hollywood. My character is going on endlessly about George Michael's heterosexuality. He's joking, but it makes people wonder, "Are we being lied to half the time?"

Q: Are we being lied to half the time?



Ben Affleck

BA: I don't know about half the time. It's more complicated than lies, it's like an angle. An angle implies subjectivity — something that's open to a number of different interpretations, and trying to get the press to adopt the interpretation that you want them to adopt. It's the same as in politics. President Bush — is the guy not very bright, or is he just a folksy, down-home guy just like you and me? Those are two different interpretations of the same thing, and each side is trying to get you to see it the way they want you to see it.

Q: What was the biggest lie told about your relationship with Jennifer Lopez?

BA: There were many lies that were printed by the press that weren't spun by the publicists. There were lots of things I'd read constantly that weren't true, to the point where I just stopped reading it because it was frustrating. In terms of me and Jennifer, the biggest lies were the ones printed in the tabloids.

Q: In the wake of your very high-profile

break-up, have you had a chance to reflect on how all this has affected you?

BA: It's a question that I think about a lot, particularly this last year. One of the things that has been nice about all this craziness I've been through recently is that it's allowed me to put things into perspective a little more. My career and success and the approbation of a certain set of people is not the most important thing to me. I don't hitch the wagon of my identity to that particular horse so much anymore. It is important to find a balance and have a real, substantive life outside of all those other things.

Q: Your co-star, Raquel Castro, was 7 years old when "Jersey Girl" was made. Having been a child actor yourself, what do you think are the biggest challenges kids who make movies face?

BA: I never had anything as big as this role when I was a kid. I wasn't on "Full House" or anything like that, so I didn't have to face some of these additional challenges. Even then, it ended up putting me in a position where my personality got bifurcated into this overly precocious kid who tried to be an adult and tried to take on more responsibility than he was capable of taking on. Then, on the other hand, there was the part of the personality that was still a kid and wanted to rebel against those kinds of things. One of the problems is I still feel that way.

Q: "Gigli" was given a Razzie Award for being the worst film of 2003. What's it like to be crowned the best of the bad?

BA: I'm proud to tell you that this isn't the first time we swept there — "Pearl Harbor" was heralded by the Razzies as well. But they never sent me anything. I thought they'd send a trophy or something — a little golden sack of grapes or whatever it's supposed to be. So I feel stifled by them, and I feel that they've diminished their integrity.

ENTERTAINMENT



Leading lady kills in Coen flick

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Some critics have panned this remake simply for not measuring up to the 1955 version, which starred Sir Alec Guinness and Peter Sellers, and was directed by Alexander Mackendrick. With all due respect to that terrific triumvirate — all of whom have moved on to the big Red Carpet in the sky — I don't remember the original film, and I'm going to assume a great many of you don't either. It's been 50 years — surely the statute of limitations has run out. So let's judge "The Ladykillers" of this 21st Century on its own merits, shall we? Written and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, this oft-inspired romp boasts a stellar cast, some wickedly funny moments and an ending that is sheer slapstick fun. Tom Hanks reminds us that he can do comedy with the best of them, and Irma P. Hall matches her Academy Award-winning co-star yuk for gut-straining yuk.

Goldthwait Higginson Dorr, Ph.D. (Hanks) is a professorial conman who never encountered a subject upon which he could not perorate. After sweet-talking a lonely church-going old widow named Mrs. Munson (Hall) into letting him a room, this crooked man of letters enlists a group of criminally-inclined oddballs to pose as musicians and help him pull off a heist. The plan is to tunnel from Mrs. Munson's root cellar — where the thieves pretend to be practicing classical music — to the vault of a nearby casino. Problem is, Dorr's team is completely dysfunctional. The "inside guy" Gawain (a spot-on Marlon Wayans) is a slacker nonpareil with



Tom Hanks and Marlon Wayans in "Ladykillers."

a hot-temper, foul mouth and a love for "the hippity-hop music," as Mrs. Munson disdainfully calls it. From the get-go, Gawain and the explosives expert Garth Pancake (J.K. Simmons of "Oz") are at each other's throats, and the ongoing tension between them inspires some high comedy. Less interesting are the remaining two members of the cabal, Tzi Ma as the laconic General, and a brainless oaf named Lump (Ryan Hurst). The real star here is Hall, who energizes the hilarious opening sequence and never stops bringing the laughter. She's good enough, even, to overshadow what is Hanks' funniest performance since 1992's "A League of Their Own." In "The Ladykillers" the leading lady kills.

(Rated R for language including sexual references. Running time: 104 minutes)

Watch footing near 'Scooby' doo-doo

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

If you were to mimic the modus operandi of the gang from Mystery Inc. and pull the mask off this sequel, you'd discover that with the exception of a few new wrinkles, it looks a lot like the first film. This time out, director Raja Gosnell and scribe James Gunn — the same team that brought us "Scooby Doo" in '02 — rely even more heavily on CGI to try and dazzle the kids who are the franchise's primary consumers. And the eye-popping effects are impressive, most notably in a wild shape-changing scene featuring Shaggy and Scooby. However, the filmmakers aren't very successful in their efforts to hook the adults who grew up watching "Scooby Doo" on pre-remote-controlled TV. Rather than run with the daffy charm that was the essence of the series and that served the first movie so well, they instead insert awkward bits that find the young super-sleuths immersed in Dr. Phil-like psychoanalysis. Does anyone over 8 years old give a hoot about Velma's self-esteem issues? Of course not. All we want are more disguised dope references and those tasty little moments that suggest everyone in Mystery Inc. — save Daphne — is gay.

Here's what's happening in Coolsville: A masked villain has created a machine that is cranking out reproduced ghosts from the series' greatest hits collection: the Pterodactyl, the Black Knight and Captain



Scooby Doo

Cutler, among others. Mystery Inc. must stop these monsters from doing scary, monstrous things. So they don disguises and investigate, like, spooky spots. The original cast returns — Freddie Prinze Jr., Sarah Michelle Gellar, Linda Cardellini, Matthew Lillard and the visual effect that is Scooby — and, as before, Lillard and the virtual-pooch absolutely steal the show. Also pitching in are Alicia Silverstone, Peter Boyle, Tim Blake Nelson and Seth Green as possible perps.

(Rated PG for some scary action, rude humor and language. Running time: 91 minutes)



"Get A Life ... A Nightlife, That Is"

BY THOMAS YOUNG & MAUREEN TOBIN

Special to the Daily Press



Review

"... There's music to hear, places to go, people to see. All of this for you and me. Life's a ball, if only you know it, and it's all just waiting for you. You're alive, so come on and show it, you've got a lot of living to do."

— Bye Bye Birdie

So let's start living!

Hold on to your dancing shoes because Rusty's Surf Ranch at the beginning of the Santa Monica Pier is Zagat reviewed, and scorching with the sounds of hot music and fiery bands. Surf on down to Rusty's Surf Ranch, the most hopping, jumping nightspot in the area. With its wonderful beachfront atmosphere, Rusty's has the best happy hour around and has lived up to the pier since 1994 with an overwhelming amount of pizzazz. Want something to cure the grumbles deep inside that stomach of yours while waiting for, or during the music? Then enjoy an extensive menu of scrumptious burgers, sandwiches, soups and salads, with entrees of seafood, meats, chicken and pastas, and great desserts as well. There is a full bar and a large wine selection. This is an excellent restaurant with a classy menu and mouthwatering food.

You can bet your sweet bippie that with these hot bands, playing everything from rock 'n roll, funk, swing, every night the folks who come here to listen also hit the dance floor with their own styles of feel-good steps. Usually Karaoke woos you on Monday and the "Battle of the Bands" compete during the week. What a great spot for your private party. There also are pool tables and tournaments. Typically, the music starts around 8:30 a.m. until late. Owner Russ Barnard runs the place with a practiced hand and general manager, Kevin Mc Veary, and Isaac Cramlet help oversee Rusty's with aplomb and ease. Event and party planner, Cindy Pfeifer, books the bands. Obviously these people know what it takes to make a club hum like this — a lot of work, run with a lot of class. A true nightspot. Bring friends or come alone. On Friday and Saturdays there is often three different bands, playing late. Monday through Friday, noon until 10 p.m., Saturday and Sunday until 1 a.m. or 2 a.m. Visit www.rustysurf.franch.com.

256 Santa Monica Pier. (310) 393-PIER, music line (310) 393-7386

■ Anytime is a good time at the Sunset Grill, Continental Café in Santa Monica. Is it really possible to have food this amazingly delectable at such unbelievably low prices? Elmer Dills thinks so, along with the easygoing locals crowd wise to this little place of almost 14 years. Owners John and Frances Lorda, the inimitable hosts/chefs, call this "French Mediterranean" cuisine. Tucked

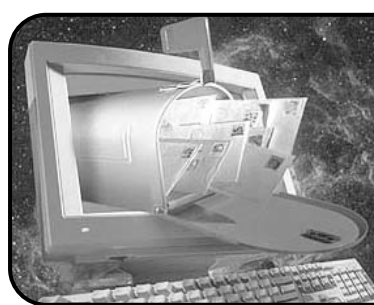
away in a nondescript strip center, Sunset Grill, a cozy spot with its breezy, easy feel, reminded us of European cafes, where you relax and enjoy the food. We sat outside, donned with umbrellas and potted plants. Order at the counter, then they will serve you. Your eyes will pop at the big plates, full to brimming. A look at the large menu and it's obvious you need to come often to try all the offered delights. Fresh is the key here. We sampled the enchanting salads which were unique to us — colorful, delicious and perfect. Order a combination of salads for dinner and with their luscious bread this would easily be a meal in itself. Have you ever had fava beans? They are in the lima bean family and Maureen loved this. Here is the home cooking you daydream about. The main courses are mouth-watering with lots of entrees, pastas and meats. There are breakfasts, lunches, desserts, which are homemade. We were statted but had to try the bread pudding and rice pudding. We were about to lick the plates but remembered our manners. Sunset Grill will become one of your favorite casual spots. Open everyday 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., except Sundays. Catering available.

1701 Ocean Park Blvd. (310) 450-7546

■ Each night is party night at Boardwalk 11 in the Palms/Cheviot Hills neighborhood for red-hot Karaoke. It's Zagat reviewed and rated by LA Magazine as one of the 25 best bars/clubs. Boardwalk 11 has got it made in the shade. Whether you just like to watch, or you aspire to sing your heart out, this is the place where karaoke is taken to a higher level.

Expect to see some highly talented singers, along with a few that might make you moan a little, but all part of the appealing character of the place. This is a classy club, very well-liked with the friendliest vibes. People here talk to each other, so you'll never feel like a stranger. Highest accolades go to owners Steven and Hiromi Spear, proprietors for over 1 1/2 years, for keeping this place jovial and jumping. Helping to set the buoyant frame-of-mind is KJ Arnold Rivera, here on five nights, belting out songs with the best of them. Boardwalk 11 has an incredible array of about 10,000 songs on CDs, with an abundant amount of TVs so you don't miss any of the show. On Friday nights, they've added comedy from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. before the karaoke begins. Plan on a great evening, starting with their large array of delicious food, kind of a combo California, Japanese, fun menu including appetizers and entrees. Karaoke starts around 9 p.m. Full bar, martini specialties. Visit www.boardwalk11.com. 10433 National Blvd. (310) 837-5245.

(E-mail your comments or suggestions to smdp4nightlife@yahoo.com and keep having fun.)



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DID YOU KNOW?: The Beatles song 'Martha My Dear' was written by Paul McCartney about his sheepdog Martha.



WORLD BRIEFLY

Indonesian election is all right

By The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Soldiers, religious leaders, businessmen and heirs to political dynasties are among major candidates running in Indonesian elections, but one key democratic element is missing: the left.

As the world's biggest Muslim country gears up for April 5 parliamentary elections — its second free ballot since the fall of ex-dictator Suharto in 1998 — the political elite is refusing to abandon the strongman's ban on the communist party and other left-wing groups.

The nearly four decade old ban illustrates how Indonesia's bloody past has hampered the development of democracy. It also has had the unintended effect of strengthening Muslim radicalism among impoverished Indonesians unable to vent their frustrations through left-wing alternatives.

"There is no place for ideological conflict in Indonesia," declared Justice Minister Yusril Mahendra, who heads the Islam-based Crescent Star Party. "Communism is not relevant to our situation here."

A soldier's story: From hero to homeless

By The Associated Press

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. — In combat, Army Spc. Dwayne Turner was a hero. Back home from Iraq, his life has been in shambles.

Just last month, the 101st Airborne Division soldier was honored with the prestigious Silver Star medal for saving at least two lives in combat. Today, he is out of the Army, driving a borrowed car and sleeping at a friend's house.

The smile he beamed at the medal ceremony masked months of problems he says has battled since returning home with battle wounds: a suicide attempt along with

flashbacks and nightmares so bad he resorted to binge drinking to fall asleep.

"I kind of felt like I was blowing in the wind pretty much," said Turner, 23, of Indianapolis, who was an Army medic.

He wound up going AWOL for two days and smoking marijuana while drunk. That, he says, resulted in a general discharge from the Army rather than an honorable discharge, and left him ineligible for college funding. The Army also demoted him from specialist to private before his discharge.

Student absent from 'Pledge' trial

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The case before the Supreme Court drew a varied crowd: Christians, atheists, politicians, educators and a bitterly divided mother and father. What was missing? The California third-grader at the center of a dispute over the Pledge of Allegiance.

A state judge had barred the girl from watching her father ask the Supreme Court on Wednesday to strike down the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools because it contains the words "under God."

Some justices, however, seemed worried about the eventual impact on her.

Justice Anthony M. Kennedy told Michael Newdow that he was asking the court to "exercise the extraordinary, the breathtaking power to declare federal law unconstitutional."

Foster caught in a bind

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Medicare actuary Richard Foster was between a rock and a hard place.

If he told Congress the Medicare bill could cost more

than \$100 billion more than they thought, he could be fired. If he quit and went public, it would make a big splash but nothing likely would change for the next actuary. If he did nothing, Congress would pass a bill without having the best information, but he'd be around to fight another day.

Foster did nothing, and Congress last year passed what some people have called the most sweeping changes in history to Medicare, the government's main health care program for older and disabled Americans.

But Foster now is telling lawmakers that the Bush administration's top Medicare official last year withheld from Congress the legislation's actual estimated cost for political gain.

Since President Bush signed the bill in December, the administration has acknowledged it believes the Medicare law will cost \$534 billion over 10 years — more than the \$395 billion estimated by congressional budget analysts.

Lincoln larger than life in Illinois town

By The Associated Press

LINCOLN, Ill. — Abraham Lincoln's ties to Illinois already are honored on everything from state license plates to commemorative quarters, but a small-town group is working on an even bigger tribute.

A 305-foot monument of Lincoln — as tall as the Statue of Liberty — has been proposed in this namesake city of about 15,000 people.

Supporters think the \$40 million statue could ultimately anchor a massive theme park blending historical exhibits with rides, restaurants and other attractions.

"If we get the money, I think you'll see it go and I think you'll see it become one of the biggest tourist attractions in America," said the Rev. S.M. Davis, a Lincoln pastor who first suggested the monument.

The idea has met skepticism in Lincoln, where some townspeople worry that the statue, which would be visible for about 20 miles, might be in bad taste. Others question whether the rural area could pull off a project so big that organizers predict it could double Lincoln's population within five years.

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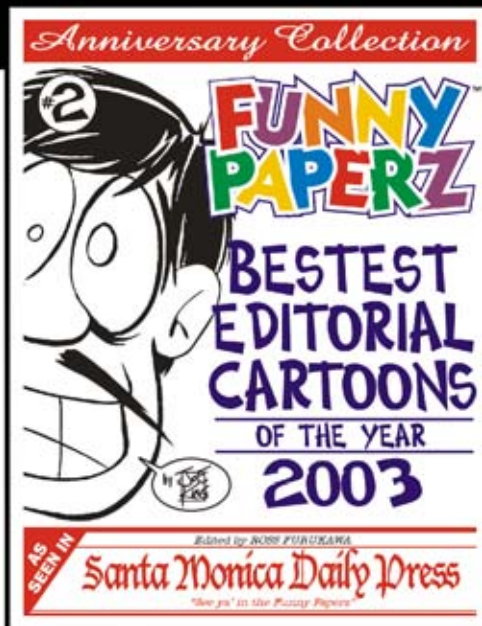
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INTERNATIONAL



Intellectuals urge restraint after killing of Hamas chief

BY MOHAMMED DARAGHMEH

Associated Press Writer

RAMALLAH, West Bank — Sixty prominent Palestinian officials and intellectuals are urging the public not to retaliate for Israel's assassination of Hamas' founder, saying it would ignite a new round of bloodshed that would only hurt Palestinian aspirations for independence.

The half-page advertisement in the PLO's Al-Ayyam newspaper called on Palestinians to lay down their arms and turn to peaceful means of protest to end Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The ad reflected growing sentiment among many Palestinian leaders and intellectuals that military struggle is not helping the Palestinian cause. Thousands of Palestinians have died during 3 1/2 years of fighting with Israel.

Hamas' founder, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, was killed in an Israeli airstrike Monday, prompting an unprecedented outpouring of outrage on Palestinian streets. Hamas has promised to strike back, saying even Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is a target.

Israeli troops have engaged Palestinian militants in isolated gunfights since Yassin's killing, but there has been no major escalation in violence.

On Wednesday, Israeli soldiers stopped a 16-year-old Palestinian with a suicide bomb vest strapped to his body at a crowded West Bank checkpoint, setting off a tense encounter with soldiers.

Pictures of the boy, Hussam Abdo, appeared on the front pages of all major Israeli newspapers Thursday, and the incident dominated radio newscasts.

In an interview with the Israeli newspaper Yediot Ahronot, Abdo said he wanted to reach the paradise he had learned about in school.

"A river of honey, a river of wine and 72 virgins. Since I have been studying Quran I know about the sweet life that waits there," Yediot quoted the boy as saying.

The family of the teenager said he was gullible and easily manipulated, and the incident was downplayed in Palestinian newspapers. Many Palestinians, including the Palestinian Authority newspaper Al-Hayat Al-Jadida, said they believed the standoff was staged by Israel.

"Every Palestinian I spoke to today was appalled and disgusted and ashamed and angry," said Iyad Sarraj, a child psychologist in the Gaza Strip.

The intellectuals who signed Thursday's ad — including peace advocate Sari Nusseibeh, lawmaker Hanan Ashrawi and Abbas Zaki, a leading member of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement — said revenge attacks over Yassin's assassination would lead to strong Israeli retaliation and further hurt the Palestinian cause.

The group called on the public to "rise again in a peaceful, wise Intefadeh (uprising)."

"We had many previous experiences with the Israelis," said Ahmed Radi, 32. "There was a truce with Israel, but Israel has not stopped its aggression."

The Yassin killing was part of Sharon's effort to crush Hamas ahead of a possible Israeli withdrawal from Gaza.

Sharon has suggested the Gaza pullout as part of a plan to separate unilaterally from the Palestinians in the absence of a peace agreement. The plan is expected to include a limited pullback from the West Bank, where Israel would impose a boundary with the Palestinians.

An Israeli delegation — including Sharon's bureau

chief Dov Weisglass and National Security Adviser Giora Eiland — is in Washington this week to discuss the plan.

On Wednesday, the Israeli team presented one scenario, showing the Americans a map in which six West Bank settlements would be removed in addition to most Gaza communities, an official said on condition of anonymity. He emphasized that no decision has been made on which option to implement.

On Wednesday, Hamas leaders pledged to hit back at Israel and target Sharon for death. The group said it is not targeting the United States.

An Israeli helicopter fired a missile at a group of militants, residents said, and a policeman was wounded.

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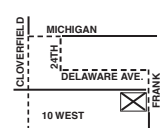
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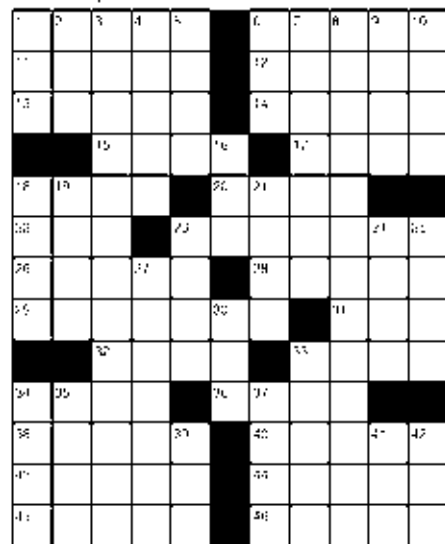
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