

First Of Gomez's Public Official Harassment Suits Against Victorville Dismissed

The first of two lawsuits filed by Victorville City Councilwoman Blanca Gomez alleging a concerted effort to undercut her elective authority and violate her civil rights has been dismissed. A second lawsuit remains in place.

Gomez's suit dismissed earlier this month was not thrown out on its merits or lack thereof. Rather, the case expired because, in the words of

the judge overseeing it, she failed to prosecute it. That circumstance came about, the *Sentinel* has learned, because the once accommodating bridges between Gomez and the two attorneys who had filed the suit on her behalf 14 months ago were burned. On her own, Gomez was unable to navigate the legal process that would have forced the City of Victorville, its former

mayor, its current mayor, one of its former councilmen, its city manager, its city attorney and its city clerk, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department and city manager of neighboring Hesperia to account for the manner in which she has been treated.

Nevertheless, some of the issues explored in Gomez's first federal lawsuit are contained in a second lawsuit she filed

six months ago. That case pertains to different but in many respects similar circumstances that informed the first. There is a much higher prospect that Gomez's second suit will make its way through the judicial process, as Gomez is yet represented by an attorney in that matter.

Gomez was first elected to the Victorville City Council in 2016. In short order she grew cross-

wise of virtually all of her council colleagues. This was at least in some measure because of her somewhat imperfect understanding of the limitations of municipal authority and its procedures, parliamentary and otherwise. Within a month of her election, she traveled to Rialto to attend a rally calling for the liberalization of U.S. immigration laws, wearing a shirt em- See P 3

In The Face Of More Warming, Climatologist Says Drought Is Likely To Stay Indefinitely

The Southwest is in a megadrought, one of the world's leading climate hydrologists has concluded following his most extensive study of climactic conditions in the West.

A. Park Williams is a climate hydrologist at UCLA, having earned his Ph.D. in 2009 from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He was a postdoctoral researcher at UC-Santa Barbara and Los Alamos National Laboratory, after which he undertook research at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. From 2015 until 2018 he taught at Columbia University. He has authored or co-authored over 20 published scientific treatises.

Having done extensive surveys of climate and weather change over differing spans of time, Williams more recently dug into the quintessence at the heart of the global warming debate, considering whether the drying of the soil that accompanies the gradual heating of the planet that has been observed and confirmed over the last 35 years is attributable to human activity or is a feature of other global cycles independent of mankind.

While there are individuals and groups contesting the concept of global warming, reliable scientific data indicates the phenomenon is both real and quantifiable. According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, "The global average surface temperature rose 0.6 to 0.9 degrees Celsius (1.1 to 1.6° Fahren- See P 6

Kittinger, Besieged For Alliances & Report She Left The State, Resigns HUSD Post

By Mark Gutglueck

Trustee Marcy Kittinger resigned her position on the Hesperia Unified School District Board on February 15 in the midst of an escalating effort by a contingent of Hesperia residents to break up the current version of the ruling coalition that has dominated the district for more than a decade.

Kittinger's departure

came more than two months after an effort to recall her from office was initiated and then dropped, and less than two weeks after a public revelation that she no longer owns a home within the district. Kittinger maintains she has remained a resident within the district's boundaries by renting a home in the area she was elected to serve. She says

she intended to stay in that residence until she completed her second term in November.

Kittinger's recent and long-term experience on the school board, on which she has served for more than seven years, is best understood in context.

Hesperia is a community that has historically been dominated by Republican politics, which

extended to its city council, its school board, its park and recreation board, and its former fire and water district boards, despite all of those entities being cataloged under California law as nonpartisan entities. In San Bernardino County, all elections are heavily influenced by partisan politics.

Over the last decade, Eric Swanson has held

sway over the board and thereby the district. Swanson was first elected to the school board in 2001 and served five years, having been voted off the board in 2006 in the aftermath of the California Charter Academy Scandal. The mishandling of finances at the California Charter Academy resulted in criminal charges being lodged against See P 2

Schweizer Gets An Unwelcoming Introduction To Wonder Valley

A Swiss tourist was given a rather inhospitable welcome to the United States when three pit bulls attacked and nearly killed him in a remote area of San Bernardino County's vast desert outback Tuesday morning.

The mauling occurred near the junction of Midway Road and Amboy Road in Wonder Valley.

The man, from Geneva, Switzerland, is in

North America on what he said was to have been a backpacking expedition. He was riding a bike within the vista of the Cleghorn Lakes Wilderness when he was set upon by the dogs. He was severely mauled, suffering bites and deep puncture wounds to his face and neck and all of his extremities.

Deputies responding to a report of See P 3

Flush With Its Own Cash, Ontario Converts Federal COVID-19 Subsidization Into Fat Employee Bonuses

Ontario, the most financially stable of all of San Bernardino County's 24 municipalities, has seen its way clear to share some of its wealth with its employees.

The city council on Tuesday approved giving most of those who work for the city 2% salary increases. Others who did not get a raise last year will receive 4% increases. Substantial

bonuses will be provided to the city's public safety employees – policeman and firefighters. There will also be generous bonuses to other members of the city's workforce.

With what approaches to be two-thirds of a billion dollars – more precisely \$657,481,036 – running through all of its funds and accounts annually, Ontario is head and shoulders over the

next-best funded cities in the county, those being Rancho Cucamonga, Fontana, San Bernardino and Victorville. Its wallet absolutely dwarfs that of places like Grand Terrace, Needles and Big Bear.

With assets such as Ontario International Airport, The Mills shopping mall and the corporate headquarters for Cemex, Ontario See P 3

Upland Leaves Northwest, Northeast, Southwest & Southeast Districts Relatively Intact

Presented with thirteen alternatives, the Upland City Council this week chose the one option which made the least geographical change to its existing electoral map.

Like all cities and other political jurisdictions and entities, Upland is redrawing its council ward borders in conformance with data from the 2020 Census.

Upland went to by-district voting in 2018, after having used an at-large electoral system in choosing its city council members for 112 years.

Upland's 2018 election method transition was noteworthy.

A wave of moves to district or ward systems among multiple San Bernardino County cities began in 2014 when advocates of district or

ward elections pushed for the change using the terms of the California Voting Rights Act to allege that those cities targeted were not electing enough so-called protected minorities - in this case meaning those of Hispanic extraction – to the county's various city and town councils. In this way, Highland, Chino Hills, Chino, Redlands, Rancho Cu-

camonga, Upland, Fontana, Big Bear, Hesperia, Yucaipa, Yucca Valley and Twentynine Palms were forced to make such a transition. Ontario will make a similar change this year.

Most, indeed, virtually all, of the city and town councils impacted by the change opportunistically used that mandate to gerrymander the newly created districts and then

adjust the timing of their elections to benefit incumbents. This entailed drawing the district lines such that incumbents would not have to run against one another and scheduling the elections in those districts so that the end of each council member's most recent election as a successful at-large candidate corresponded with the election season See P 6

Kittinger Was Elected Onto A School Board That Was Steeped In Controversy, Scandal And Contentious Politics from front page

that entity's founder, Charles Steven Cox, and Tad Honeycutt, who managed a for-profit subsidiary company, Everything For Schools, which was a vendor of both services and supplies to the nonprofit schools run by the academy. Cox and Honeycutt made off with some \$40 million in state education money provided to the academy before a state audit resulted in the shutdown of the operation in 2004. Swanson had been a board member of three of the four schools run by the California Charter Academy before leaving those positions on June 30, 2001, slightly more than four months prior to his election to the Hesperia School District Board of Trustees. The same day as his resignation from the California Charter Academy boards, through a deal engineered by Cox and Honeycutt, Swanson's information services company had obtained a no-bid \$700,000 contract for computer systems.

In 2007, Cox and Honeycutt were criminally charged with a total of 117 felonies, including fraud, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds relating to the California Charter Academy debacle. There were multiple delays in the matter going to trial, as the different attorneys representing both defendants sought to exit from the case, most notably Cox's attorney, Earl Wade Schinder, who committed suicide. At some point, Honeycutt, who, during the heyday of the California Charter Academy had gone abroad and secreted millions of dollars of his share of the loot from the charter academy swindle into bank accounts in Spain, Brazil and Vanuatu, slipped out of the country and is living abroad under the name of Ted Viera as an international fugitive.

Because prosecutors and Cox's defense team do not want to start the California Charter Academy criminal proceedings without Honeycutt, the trial has not yet begun, more than 14 years after the case against Cox and Honeycutt was filed.

Revelations about Swanson's profiteering as a vendor to the same charter academy for which he was a board member was a key factor in his inability to be reelected to the Hesperia Unified School District Board in 2006 and his failed effort at election to the same board in 2008.

In 2010, however, memory of the California Charter Academy scandal had dimmed somewhat. Assisted by an unusually large field of 14 candidates in that year's school board race, Swanson managed to place second, with 4,505 votes or 11 percent, which netted him a return to office. Among his competitors that year was Kittinger, who captured 2,824 votes or 6.9 percent, which put her in fifth place. That was not sufficient to win her a position on the board, but she did outperform nine of the candidates in that contest, which saw the three top vote-getters elected.

In 2012, Kittinger competed once more, this time in a field of four for two posts that were up for election. She finished third, with 20.46 percent of the vote.

Two years later, Kittinger made her third attempt for an opportunity to oversee the district, this time in a field of six vying for three positions. She polled 5,787 votes of a total 26,499 cast or 21.84 percent, coming in second place behind Swanson who received 5,827 votes or 21.99 percent.

She was welcomed onto the board, which then consisted of Swanson, Nicole Childs, Cody Gregg and Ella Rogers.

An element of local politics in far-flung 20,105-square mile San Bernardino County and particularly in the heavily Republican desert region of the county is the

importance assigned to the ability of the institutions of government to provide earning opportunities for the population at large. Governments, which include school districts, water districts and cities and towns, serve as employers of local residents and a cash cow for vendors, contractors and service providers. An important distinction between the differing factions of Republicans who hold the lion's share of the political offices in San Bernardino County pertains to the attitude that those who make up those factions have with regard to the economic opportunity government provides. One faction holds that government exists fundamentally to provide services to residents and citizens, such that in the case of a school district its first priority should be the education of the students that lie within the district's boundaries. The second faction lives by the credo that local government exists as much to contribute to the local economy as it does to provide services to its constituents, such that a major feature of government, including school districts, is to provide employment to a good share of the populace and simultaneously purchase the goods and services local businesses have to sell and offer. For Swanson, the Hesperia Unified School District serves the greater Hesperia area, including the nearly 73-square miles within Hesperia's city limits and the city's sphere of influence extending into adjoining Oak Hills, both by educating its youth and employing the district's 2,269 employees, of whom 982 are teaching faculty, as well as by serving as a consumer of goods and paying for the professional services offered by entrepreneurs in the area.

Nevertheless, stark voting differences between school board members occur in only a relative minority of votes, as roughly 85 percent of school district issues are decided on 5-0 votes or unanimous

agreement among all board members present.

Once elected, Kittinger sought to fit in on the district board. She seemed to naturally hew to Swanson's side of the philosophical divide whenever differences between board members manifested, yet not in an absolutist sense, occasionally voting with Rogers and Gregg on issues where there was a division on the board.

In 2016, Gregg and Rogers were reelected in what would be the district's last at-large election.

In 2018, Kittinger was elected to represent the Hesperia Unified School District's Area 2 in what was the district's first vote by electoral division. Swanson was chosen to represent the district's Area 3 and Mark Dundon was elected in Area 5.

That same year, there was a degree of upheaval in the city politically, as then-Mayor Russ Blewett died in May, and Jeremiah Brosowski was appointed to replace him. Brosowski was an acolyte of Bill Postmus. Postmus was a former member of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors representing the High Desert in the early 2000s and the chairman of the Republican Central Committee whose involvement in pay-to-play politics had led to his fall from grace shortly after the full-blown exposure of the California Charter Academy scandal. Postmus was linked to the California Charter Academy by means of substantial amounts of money under the control of Cox that were supposed to be used for the academy's educational mission being diverted to his campaign fund. Postmus managed to avoid being criminally charged in the California Charter Academy affair. He was less fortunate in other regards however, and in 2009 and 2010 prosecutors rang him up on 14 felony political corruption charges, ranging from conspiracy to misappropriation of public funds to fraud to bribery to conflict of in-

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terest by a public official, with eight of those relating to his time as supervisor and six pertaining to the roughly two years he served in the capacity of county assessor in 2007 and 2008.

Ten years after that, in the 2018 election season, Postmus had made a bid to make a vicarious political comeback through Brosowke and the perpetuation of the political tenure of another of his political associates, Hesperia Councilman Paul Russ. Postmus had failed to leave behind him the pay-to-play political approach that had led to his earlier demise, and Russ's 2018 bid to remain as member of the Hesperia City Council was thwarted by Cody Gregg's older brother Cameron, who defeated Russ in the city's first by-district election held that year when they competed head-to-head in Hesperia's District 3. Brosowski managed to achieve a narrow, come-from-behind victory in the city's District 4 race over Brigit Bennington. Within a year, however, efforts by Postmus to elevate Brosowski even further politically, including engineering for him an appointment to a quarter-of-a-million-dollar annual compensation position with the West Valley Water Agency in lower San Bernardino County taken together with other networking moves involving the development industry in return for concessions on housing density and development standards, alienated Brosowski from all of the other members of

the city council with the exception of Eric Swanson's wife, Rebekah, who had been elected to the city council in 2016 with Postmus's assistance.

There ensued a battle royal for the soul of Hesperia among its political class. In September 2019, based upon what the balance of the city council considered to be convincing evidence that Brosowski was not in fact living in Hesperia, he was removed from the city council. Rebekah Swanson and Brosowski dissented in that vote.

As a member of the Hesperia Unified School District Board of Trustees, Kittinger found herself in the middle of this political maelstrom. Her association with Swanson and very presence on the board put her into the political fray, no matter which way she voted. As it turned out, in 2020 Ella Rogers was displaced from the board because, with the change from at-large to by-district voting, she did not live in either Area 1 or Area 4, where the district's elections were being held that year. That November, Cody Gregg was retained on the board as the representative of District 4 and Maria Gomez was elected to represent District 1.

At the district from that point out, the momentum was with Eric Swanson, as Dundon, Gomez and more often than not Kittinger sided with him on votes where sharp differences existed among members of the

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Figueroa Swoops In To Protect Valdivia From Potential Mayoralty-Ending Referendum

By Mark Gutglueck

Mayor John Valdivia this week narrowly escaped being consigned to political oblivion through the intervention of his one remaining ally on the city council.

Two weeks after Third Ward Councilman Juan Figueroa on February 2 endorsed placing a measure on the June ballot to determine if San Bernardino residents would prefer to eliminate the city's mayoral post as an in-

dependently elected one in favor of rotating the mayor's gavel amongst the city council's members, on February 16 he withdrew that support, allowing Valdivia to veto a city council request of the county registrar of voters to give the city's voters just such a choice.

Valdivia took a gripping command of the governmental machinery in the county seat more than three years ago after he was elected mayor in the November

2018 election. He appeared at that time to be preparing himself a solid niche from which he could launch his next step up the electoral ladder, perhaps into a state legislative or federal congressional post. Over the last two years, however, Valdivia has plummeted from his seemingly inviolable position of political authority. He has struggled to level his flight and has for the time abandoned any thoughts of making his way to

Sacramento or Washington, D.C., and is seeking to merely hang onto the mayoralty for another term. He remains in a holding pattern, with his political rivals and opponents aiming one fusillade after another his way.

On Wednesday night, the council appeared poised to dash his hope of remaining as mayor. At the last minute, Figueroa, with whom Valdivia's political career now seems inextricably bound, swooped in to save him.

Few people can claim to have moved as far forward as John Valdivia and as few can be said to have fallen as far back.

In 2009, Valdivia made an inauspicious start to his political career, running for the San Bernardino City Council in the Fourth Ward. He was trounced, finishing third among four candidates with 182 votes for 5.68 percent. The second-place finisher, Joe

Arnett, polled more than three times the number of votes Valdivia received. The winner, Fred Shorett, who would later become Valdivia's most steadfast antagonist, garnered more than 12 times as many votes as did Valdivia, with 2,330 or 72.77 percent.

Valdivia did not quit, however. Two years later, he relocated into the city's Third Ward, and ran for office by promising to ensure that deny-

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Ontario Is Fortunate Enough To Be Able To Spend An Amount Nearly Equal To The Entire Budget Of Another County City On Employee Bonuses

from front page

draws to itself substantial tax revenue. Thus, money flowing into the city in the form of the pandemic relief funding from the federal government – the proceeds from the American Rescue Plan Act – could be spared to keep morale up at City Hall.

The money being

doled out, and the relative amounts thereof, put the city's pecking order on display. Each sworn policeman and active duty fireman will receive a one-time \$10,000 bonus. The city's full-time employees, including civilian employees in the police and fire departments, are each getting a \$7,500 bonus. Part-time employees working more than 10 hours a month will be handed a check for \$600. Those part-time city workers working less than 10 hours a month will receive a \$300 bonus.

To remain in keeping with the spirit, intention and legal purpose of the

American Rescue Plan Act, a resolution accompanying the city council's unanimous vote to give the bonuses made clear they were being provided to city staff for continuing to provide "essential services" during the now 24-month-long COVID-19 pandemic.

Essential was a key word, as City Hall has often been shuttered over the last two years, including last month when residents and others showed up for a city council meeting and were turned away at the entrance to City Hall, and were unable to watch or participate in the pro-

ceedings.

Indeed, the price tag on the bonuses for Ontario's approximately 1,200 full-time and 200 part-time employees was nearly equal to the City of Grand Terrace's entire \$1.5 million general fund budget.

The bonuses were just the icing on the cake in the effort to keep Ontario's help contented.

The council also approved what are overall four percent salary increases for most employees effective July 1, 2022 as compared to what they were making prior to the end of Fiscal Year 2020-21 on June 30, 2021. City employees

who are members of the Teamsters Union will get a retroactive 2% pay increase in base salary that goes back to July 4, 2021 and an additional 2% increase that starts July 3, 2022. Police officers and police management will

receive a 2% increase, retroactive to January 2. Those working in management will receive a 2% salary enhancement, as well.

-Mark Gutglueck



Wonder Valley Pit Bulls Nearly Kill Tourist

from front page

what had occurred found him and initiated lifesaving measures to stem his bleeding. He was transported to the Desert Re-

gional Medical Center in Palm Springs, where he remains. Hospital employees were unwilling to release his name.

The dogs, which were yet in the area after the attack, were captured and are now in the custody of San Bernardino County Animal Control.

-Mark Gutglueck

With Her Of Ignorance Of Protocol, Disrespect For Authority, Readiness To Make Spurious Charges Of Racism Against Her Adversaries & Occasional Exposure Of Bona Fide Establishment Corruption, Gomez Has Become The Bête Noire Of Victorville's Political Elite

from page 3

blazoned with a City of Victorville logo. This put her at immediate odds with then-City Councilman Eric Negrete, who denounced her for associating the city with a cause he said he and the city did not officially endorse. Gomez repeatedly clashed with then-Mayor Gloria Garcia during council meetings, as often about procedural issues or ones pertaining to initiating, continuing or ending discussions of topics as about the substance of what was being discussed. Gomez's challenging of Garcia's authority at times grew heated, resulting in occasions where Gomez was expelled from some

meetings, and escorted out of the council chambers by sheriff's deputies at Garcia's instruction. Beyond the testy relationship she had with Garcia and Negrete, Gomez did not get along particularly well with two of the other members of the council at that time, Jim Cox, who had previously served as Victorville's city manager for more than three decades, and Jim Kennedy.

Gomez's antagonistic and contentious style often involves provocative acts, as when she draped herself in a Mexican flag during a council meeting. This further alienated her from her elected colleagues. In her crusade against what she consid-

ers to be large-scale societal injustice, she comes across as having a chip on her shoulder, and she routinely takes recourse in accusing those resisting her efforts of having racist motivation. For many, this has been particularly galling, as her clashes have as often been with Latinas and Latinos as with Anglos.

On December 21, 2020, San Diego-based attorney Marc Applbaum and his La Jolla-based law partner Bryan Gonzales filed a civil rights lawsuit on Gomez's behalf in Riverside Federal Court naming The City of Victorville, Victorville City Manager Keith Metzler, former Victorville Mayor Gloria Garcia, former Victorville City Councilman Jim Cox, Victorville Mayor Debra Jones, the Victorville City Council, Victorville City Attorney Andre deBortnowski, Victorville Assistant City Manager Sophie Smith,

Victorville City Clerk Charlene Robinson, Victorville Assistant City Clerk Marcia Wolters and Victorville Spokeswoman Sue Jones, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department and Hesperia City Manager Nils Bentsen. The suit alleged Gomez had been disenfranchised by current and former city officials "as a result of her alliances with pro-immigration and homeless nonprofit organizations."

Victorville city officials were "systematically disrupting her from performing her duties" in her capacity as a city council member, the suit alleged, "by physically and electronically blocking access to meetings and to her city government emails for the sole purpose of keeping her silent and for asking questions about the fraud and corruption agenda being systematically and strategically coordinat-

ed" at City Hall, according to the lawsuit.

The suit alleged that on February 6, 2018, then-Mayor Gloria Garcia "publicly stated that [Gomez] 'was a criminal on welfare.'" The suit stated that Gomez "is not allowed to either object or cast her vote in favor or in opposition to city council matters." To support that allegation, Applbaum and Gonzales cited the city council's vote "approving \$18,000.00 paid by the Victorville taxpayers for attorney fees paid to defendant Andre deBortnowski's law office that represents civil litigation clients, including, local resident Joe Fekete that (sic) had filed a civil harassment lawsuit against the mayor."

The lawsuit stated that Gomez had been "locked out of city council meetings and denied access to city business and documents in an arbitrary and capricious manner."

The lawsuit further cited an incident that took place in Hesperia on August 2, 2018, when Gomez had gone to Hesperia City Hall to assist in registering Hispanic candidates for a city council run in that year's election. Gomez was "wrongfully arrested as a result of a City Hall employee requesting a citizen's arrest on suspicion of resisting arrest and trespassing at Hesperia City Hall for assisting local candidates running for public office," according to the suit. "[Gomez] alleges the city clerk of Hesperia contacted defendant Bensen [sic] to coordinate the unlawful arrest of [Gomez]. On August 2, 2018, Blanca Gomez alleges that she was wrongfully arrested pursuant to Penal Code § 834 as a result of Hesperia City Manager, defendant Nils Bentsen, who used his personal cell

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Kittinger Found Herself Aligned With The Established Wing On The School Board Tied In With Long-Time Member Swanson

from page 2

board. Cody Gregg had grown more isolated than ever before.

In early 2020, the COVID-19 epidemic infected its way into Southern California, escalating into a pandemic by late March and early April. Mandates from Sacramento put an end to open public gatherings and meetings, such as those held by local governing boards.

In July 2020, Kittinger and her husband, Brian, quietly sold their home in Oak Hills. That abode was her residence of record, the one at which she was registered to vote and thereby qualified her to run for, and upon being elected, serve as the representative of the residents of the School District's Area 2. Her husband, according to Kittinger, moved the family household, including their son, Daniel, to a home in Hayden, Idaho at that time. She remained behind, taking up residence in a rental on Yosemite Street, which lies within Area 2. She continued to represent Area 2 on the board.

After Governor Gavin Newsom's COVID-19-related mandates in 2020, the district offered its board members the option of attending the district's board meetings in person or participating remotely, using the Zoom teleconferencing system.

Kittinger remotely attended the July 13, 2020; August 3, 2020; September 14, 2020; October 5, 2020; November 2, 2020; December 14, 2020; January 25, 2021; March 1, 2021, March 8, 2021, June 21, 2021; and September 27, 2021 meetings.

Kittinger was physically present at the January 11, 2021; February 8, 2021; April 5, 2021; May 3, 2021; May 24, 2021; June 7, 2021; June

14, 2021; August 2, 2021; August 16, 2021, August 21, 2021, September 13, 2021; October 4, 2021; October 25, 2021; November 8, 2021, December 13, 2021, January 10, 2022 and January 12, 2022 meetings.

In the fall of 2021, a group of activists in Hesperia, perhaps in anticipation of the 2022 election cycle, began to step up their political activity, including making attacks on Swanson, Dundon, Kittinger and Gomez. In November, a group of Hesperia residents initiated a recall effort against the four. Those signing onto that effort included Jeremy Lynn, Jerrilyn Pike, Bill Holland, Lynnette Holland, William Holland, Nathaniel Pike, Joshua Lopez, Kathy Lopez, Jose Lopez, Kristen DeWittie, John Flemmer, Christina Flemmer, Mary Pelley, Robert Pelley, Lizette Holland, Andree Caballero, Darren Schreiner, Shanna Fait, William Fait, Stephanie Bravo, Fredrick Bravo, Stanley Olson, Esther Olson, Kayla Vazquez, Candice Hughes, Amber Casilla, Wendy Carlos, Chris Schultz, Jenny Roberts, Michelle Rios, Stephanie Bourque, Shawn Bourque, Bradley Willson, Elizabeth Wilson, April Manzo, Tiffany Vanstrien, Anthony Archuleta, MacKenzie Archuleta, Shawna Archuleta, Michelle Henriquez, Brigit Bennington, Morgan Tate, Jeff Bennington, Randy Lovewell, Diane Best, Kevin Best, Darlene Stevens, Dominic Glass, Wendy Glass, Lorie Cardillo, John Cardillo, Alyssa Carey, Lisa Sauer, Jennifer Sauer and Scott Smith.

Those seeking the recall of Kittinger, specifically, objected to her support, along with the three other members of the board, of precautions the district sought to implement in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily enforcing what the recall advocates characterized as "unlawful" mandates forcing vaccinations of all students and staff, "despite medical and religious exemptions

or children having obtained natural immunity through illness recovery as has been a time-tested medical reality."

Moreover, the recall proponents alleged, Kittinger "failed to protect and grow school staff to meet the dire needs of the students by forcing unlawful mandates and unproven invasive testing regimen, in an effort to remove any objections to said mandates."

Recall proponents also took issue with the district's action to utilize \$141 million in government COVID-19 funds for awarding construction and infrastructure contracts to individuals described as the board members' "closest friends and supporters."

Ultimately, the recall proponents dropped the recall effort targeting Kittinger and Dundon, while electing to concentrate on Swanson and Gomez.

The recall effort nevertheless led to a circumstance that brought scrutiny to Kittinger that may have indirectly led to her decision to resign.

On November 15, 2021, both Swanson and Gomez attended the Association of San Bernardino County Special Districts meeting held in Yucaipa. Two days later, both were scheduled to take part as the district's representatives at the November Hesperia Tri-Agency meeting.

The Tri-Agency referenced consists of the City of Hesperia, the Hesperia Recreation and Parks District and the Hesperia Unified School District. Swanson and Gomez were less than enthusiastic about attending that meeting, particularly since there were individuals involved in both the city and the recreation and park district who were among those gunning for their recall. They begged off, and sought to have Kittinger, the school district's alternate representative, attend in their stead. Kittinger, however, was a no-show at the November 17 Hesperia Tri-Agency Meeting. That raised questions but had no immediate impact.

The January 10 meet-

ing of the Hesperia Unified School District Board last month was abruptly adjourned some 11 minutes and 27 seconds after it began when some of those in attendance refused to comply with the California state mandate to wear masks within the board meeting room.

When the board read-journed in a specially-called meeting on January 12, the sole item on the agenda listed for action pertained to "continuing authority to hold virtual meetings."

Consequently, Kelly Gregg, the father of School Board Member Cody Gregg and City Councilman Cameron Gregg, began to explore why the district was seeking that authority. According to Kelly Gregg, that inquiry took on more urgency after he was told that Kittinger was living out of state.

Shortly thereafter, Kelly Gregg said, he learned that Kittinger and her husband had sold their 2,453-square foot home on Blue Rose Lane in Oak Hills on July 3, 2020 for \$550,000.

Kelly Gregg said he believed that Swanson and District Superintendent David Olney had long known that Kittinger was no longer living at the home where she was registered to vote.

At the district's February 7, meeting, Kelly Gregg said, he was informed that Kittinger was living in Idaho. He carried out some research, Kelly Gregg said, obtaining documentation that Brian and Marcy Kittinger had purchased a home in Hayden, Idaho on July 24, 2020, and that they had obtained a homeowner's exemption on the property which involved a declaration that the home, situated on .2673 of an acre on Hurricane Drive in Hayden in Kootenai County Idaho was their primary residence.

Kelly Gregg said he made a report of what he had learned to the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office. He offered his assessment that both Swanson

and Gomez were seeking to keep knowledge of Kittinger's move under wraps because Kittinger's vote represented, joined with their votes, control over the board and the district. He said he believed Kittinger was residing almost exclusively in Idaho from July 2020 until March of 2021, during which time, with two exceptions, she attended the school board's meetings remotely by Zoom.

Kelly Gregg said there are grounds to believe Board Member Gomez, who is now board president, made the effort to extend the authority to hold virtual meetings as a ploy to allow Kittinger to remain on the board and participate in the meetings by teleconference from Idaho. Ultimately, Kelly Gregg theorized, Swanson and Gomez were intent on allowing Kittinger to serve out two full terms as a board member, from 2014 until later this year, since serving two terms on a governmental agency board would render her eligible, under California law, to receive lifetime medical coverage for herself and her husband to be paid by the district. In exchange for that lifetime benefit, Kelly Gregg said, it appeared Kittinger was willing to vote to support Swanson's agenda. It would be the option of the board to provide her that lifetime coverage by a vote, Gregg said. He noted that Swanson in the past had voted to extend such coverage to former board members Jack Hamilton and Lori Nielson because they had been aligned with him when they were on the board, and that Swanson had withheld extending that coverage to Ella Rogers because she had not seen eye-to-eye with him during the time they served together.

Marcy Kittinger said she was not aware of the district allowing lifetime benefits to school board members.

"As the district does not offer this," Kittinger said, "I was neither going to receive this nor was I on the board to receive this. My intention

was to complete my term to fulfill my obligation to the school community. Given the current dissension that has been caused by my need to travel frequently to Idaho to tend to my aging mother, I am stepping down to avoid distractions from the district's essential work which is service to students."

Kittinger disputed the contention that she was not living within the school district's Area 2 for the past 19 months.

"I was living in Hesperia," she insisted. "I was renting a place. I was living in Area 2. You can serve [in an elected capacity] as long as you reside within the district, the area where you are elected. You do not have to own property."

Kittinger said that while "It is true we sold our house," she continued to be a resident of the area and a citizen eligible to serve in an office she had been elected to.

As for the documentation relating to a primary residency in Idaho, Kittinger said, "That is something my husband filed. We were not living together at the time, because I was still here. California was my residence."

The suggestion that she resigned her position with the district because her move to Idaho had been discovered "is not factual," she said.

She is leaving California, Kittinger said, "because my mother is very ill. She was injured in a fall. She is living with my son and husband now. I am going up there to take care of her. I don't know how much time with her I will have left. That is why I am leaving now. My priority is to be there to take care of my mom."

She is not cutting and running from adversity at the district, she said, but did admit that things there have been contentious. "There are people who want to get rid of the superintendent," she said. "They want to take the district in a different direction. They are attacking everyone who doesn't agree with them."

Having Antagonized The High Desert's Political Establishment, Gomez Has Seen Its Wrath Unleashed Upon Her *from page 3*

phone to take plaintiff's picture when she was requesting that [Deputy] Sheriff Crosswhite not videotape her arrest for purely political reasons, capturing and publishing her illegal arrest on the internet for suspicion of resisting arrest and trespassing at Hesperia City Hall for nothing more than assisting local candidates running for public office."

The suit states that "[Gomez] alleges that defendant San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department commenced a legal action without probable cause solely to embarrass [Gomez] for political reasons as requested by defendant city manager that (sic) is intent on harming [Gomez] in retaliation for being independent and honest."

In the aftermath of her arrest, the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office did not file charges against Gomez on the trespassing nor on the resisting arrest allegations made by the sheriff's office relating to the incident at Hesperia City Hall.

The suit further alleged an unholy alliance has come to exist between Victorville city officials and the Fourth Estate. "On September 9, 2020, [the] Victorville *Daily Press* leaked [sic] a story that defendant Keith Metzler sent a letter to the California Employment Development Department after his suspicion of employment fraud based on an unemployment claim filed on May 17, 2020 under the common and ubiquitous name, B Gomez."

According to the lawsuit, "In Victorville, nepotism is rampant among the elected and appointed officials. Upon

information and belief defendant Metzler is a cousin to the defendant mayor and also related to defendant Cox whose stepdaughter is married to defendant city attorney and that Elizabeth Becerra, the newly elected councilmember is a cousin to defendant mayor and that journalist, Rene la Cruz with the *Daily Press*, is a nephew to defendant mayor."

No journalists were named in the suit.

Relatively soon after the lawsuit was filed there was a falling out between Gomez and her attorneys.

On January 11, 2021, Applbaum filed a request to withdraw as counsel of record for Gomez, leaving the matter to be handled by Gonzales. Gonzales filed the following day, January 12, to be released as Gomez's attorney. On January 25, 2021, Judge Jesus Bernal granted the requests terminating both Applbaum and Gonzales as her legal representatives.

It then fell to Gomez to serve as her own attorney. She made no further filings and neglected to have a copy of the lawsuit served upon all of those named in the complaint. Nor were other notices of milestones and hearings in the case served upon the defendants.

Judge Bernal was serving as the presiding judge and would have heard the case if it went to trial. Judge Kenly Kiyu Kato was the referral judge.

Last month, in response to defense filings, Judge Bernal ordered Gomez to produce documentation relating to the progression of the case and make a dem-

onstrations of why a motion of dismissal should not be granted by January 18. On February 1, in response to Gomez having made no filing, Judge Bernal dismissed the entire action, ruling that Gomez had "failed to file a proof of service to demonstrate she had served the summons and complaint on [the] defendants within 90 days after the complaint was filed."

After her abandonment by Applbaum and Gonzales, Gomez made little adjustment in the way in which she reports herself publicly, yet acting provocatively in certain contexts. On three occasions near mid-year 2021, she and her political associate, Daniel Rodriguez, involved themselves in acts of controversy which resulted in criminal filings against the both of them. On June 2, 2021 Gomez was with Rodriguez at the Panera Bread bakery-café when Rodriguez became involved in an argument over his having vaped inside the café premises. The sheriff's department was summoned, and he and Gomez were cited for interfering with the operation of the business.

On July 6 at the Victorville City Council meeting, Rodriguez was asked to leave when officials felt he was interfering with the conduct of the proceedings.

At the July 20 Victorville City Council meeting, he was arrested when his videorecording antagonized Mayor Debra Jones, particularly when he aimed his camera at her husband, Ernest Jones, who was also present.

Gomez was arrested along with Rodriguez on July 20 and charged with him on November 1. Rodriguez was criminally charged in connection with the June 2, July 6 and July 20 incidents. Gomez was charged with regard to her activity on June 2 and June 20 but was not charged in the July 6 matter. Rodriguez did not waive his right to a speedy trial and endured an 18-day jury

trial between December 2 and December 28. Conspiracy to disturb a public meeting and two resisting arrest charges against him were dropped. The interfering with a business charge at the Panera Bread bakery-café was converted to trespassing and he was convicted on that charge. He was convicted on the charge of disturbing the July 20 meeting, but was acquitted on the charge of disturbing the July 6 meeting.

Gomez waived her right to a speedy trial. She was arraigned on Tuesday, January 4 with her attorney, Raj Maline, entering not guilty pleas for her before Judge Scott Seeley on six charges relating to the June 2 and July 20 incidents.

Before the criminal charges relating to the June 2, July 6 and July 20 incidents were filed, however, Gomez herself took legal action, this time through San Diego-based attorney Brian Pease.

On August 8, Pease filed a complaint naming the County of San Bernardino and Sheriff's Detective Tyler McGee, deputies John Cahow, V. Quiroz T. Gagne and Sheriff's Captain John Wickum, who heads the sheriff's department's operation in Victorville.

According to that lawsuit, after the July 20 incident, the sheriff's department engaged in an illegitimate effort to justify the action taken at the council meeting in which Gomez was arrested. At issue, according to Pease, was that both Gomez and Rodriguez were videorecording the meeting, their videos demonstrated that neither of them had disrupted the meeting, and that the disruption occurred when the mayor called for the sheriff's officers to interact with Rodriguez to prevent his videorecording of the meeting. The suit alleges that McGee, acting in his capacity as a San Bernardino County Sheriff's detective, obtained a search warrant from San Bernardino County Superior Court Judge Kyle Brodie to search Go-

mez's and Rodriguez's homes, including "all rooms, closets, attics, garages, storage areas, patios, vehicles, RV in the back yard, including any safes, vaults, miscellaneous locked containers as well as all person's [sic] present." According to the suit, "The property to be searched for was listed as: 'cell phones possessed by Gomez and Rodriguez.'"

The theory McGee used in obtaining the warrant, according to the lawsuit, was that Gomez and Rodriguez had conspired to interrupt and disturb the July 20 meeting. In actuality according to Pease, the disturbance at the meeting evolved as a consequence of the city's action, specifically that of Mayor Jones, and no such conspiracy existed, a fact known and understood by McGee and the sheriff's department when the warrant was being prepared. "This warrant was obtained on false pretenses, as it is legal to record city council meetings, and no crime was committed other than by [the] defendants," the lawsuit states. "McGee and Defendants Quiroz, Cahow and [unknown] San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputies then went to the home of Councilmember Gomez,

where she rents a room in a home with several other roommates. Only the property owner and his brother were initially present, who speak only Spanish. Defendants held these two individuals at gunpoint while they searched all rooms in the house, and seized property belonging to everyone living there. The items [the] defendants seized, which [the] defendants left a receipt for, were: a Nokia cell phone, an Apple watch, a Samsung Galaxy, a Samsung computer, a black/red USB drive, three iPads, a California driver license, a silver Apple laptop, three iPhone S series cell phones, four other iPhones, an Acer Chromebook, a MacBook Air, a Lenovo laptop, a white iPhone, a wallet with Robert Rodriguez's California

driver license, a black iPhone, Sky devices and a Microsoft laptop. [The] defendants also searched the home of Rodriguez and seized items from there as well."

According to the lawsuit, "Robert Rodriguez was peacefully, unobtrusively, and legally filming the Victorville City Council meeting, when the Victorville mayor asked sheriff's deputies who were present to search Rodriguez's phone to determine if he was filming. The San Bernardino Sheriff's Department has a \$29.1 million contract with the City of Victorville to provide police services. When the deputies complied with the illegal request from the mayor, Councilmember Gomez left her seat on the dais and approached the deputies and Rodriguez in the audience, while filming and livestreaming to Instagram on her cellphone as well. The deputies then arrested both Gomez and Rodriguez, and seized their cellphones. The deputies forced Gomez to the ground and handcuffed her hands behind her back. They then picked her up and paraded her around City Hall in handcuffs. When Gomez received her cellphone back, she saw that [the] defendants had not only deleted the videos of the incident she had taken, but had also gone into her Instagram account and deleted the videos there as well. When [the] defendants executed the search warrant, they took several items listed above that were not 'cell phones possessed by Gomez and Rodriguez,' which are the only items the search warrant authorized the defendants to take. Accordingly, the individual defendants were acting in their individual capacities as nothing more than common criminals and thieves, stealing these items from Councilmember Gomez's and her roommates' home without any legal authority to do so, although [the] defendants were acting under color of state law. [The]

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With Upland's 2018 Transition To District Elections, Stone, Filippi & Timm Sought To End Elliott's Council Tenure; She Outmaneuvered Them And Now They Are Gone *from front page*

for the first by-district election in each council member's district.

In Upland, however,

because Councilwoman Janice Elliott was out of step with her council colleagues on a num-

ber of issues which had also divided the Upland community, the council attempted to use the by-district voting transition as a means of ending her tenure on the council rather than prolonging it. As Elliott had first been elected in 2016, she was not due to run for reelection until 2020. The

other members of the council drew the city's district map into what was otherwise a logical pattern, making four districts that were composed of the city's northwest quadrant as District 1, its northeast quadrant as District 2, its southwest quadrant as District 3 and its southeast quad-

rant as District 4. It then timed the elections so that the District 2, 3 and 4 elections took place in 2018 and the District 1 and mayoral race took place in 2020.

The drawing of the Upland district map and the timing of the elections was intended to benefit then-Councilman Gino Filippi, who had been elected in 2010, reelected in 2014 and was due to run for reelection in 2018; and Councilwoman Carol Timm, who had been elected in 2014 and was due to seek reelection in 2018. Filippi resided in District 3 and Timm in District 4, so each conveniently was set to face voters in rhythm

with their existing council tenures. Elliott was a resident of District 2. Were she to have simply served out until 2020 the at-large term to which she was elected in 2016, she would not have been eligible to run for the council in 2020, as the District 2 councilperson would at that time yet have two years remaining on his or her term. In this way, it had been Elliott's council rivals' intention to put her into a position whereby she would be forced to leave the council in 2020, unless she chose to run for mayor, in which case she would need to run against the entrenched

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In Accordance With His Ambition, Valdivia Ran Again & Again, Looking To Move Up The Political Ladder *from page 3*

ing salary increases to the city's firemen would not be used as a strategy to stave off municipal bankruptcy. With the firefighters' union's support, he won, and took office in 2012. Valdivia

managed to preserve for the firefighters their raises, but later that year, the city filed for Chapter Nine bankruptcy protection.

In 2014, Valdivia initiated a run for Congress

in the 31st Congressional District but then aborted the candidacy.

A year later, against Valdivia's wishes, the city council in seeking to map San Bernardino out of bankruptcy, closed out its 148-year-old fire department in favor of an arrangement with the county to provide fire protection and

emergency medical service to the city and its residents. The high cost of firefighter salaries and benefits was cited as the driving factor in that move. Valdivia survived that debacle when no one emerged to run against him in the Third Ward in 2015.

Continued on Page 10

California's Drought Is Intensifying & Computer Modeling Indicates Human Activity Is At The Root Of The Heat That Is Causing It, Scientist Says *from front page*

heit) between 1906 and 2005, and the rate of temperature increase has nearly doubled in the last 50 years."

Williams utilized 29 scientific frameworks to create an overarching model of the planet involving no human-caused warming, which he compared with actual weather and climate data to hypothesize whether the extreme weather events recently observed were caused by climate change.

Along the way, he made two rather grave findings. The megadrought the West, and particularly California, is involved in is the worst in at least 1,200 years, surpassing what was previously considered to be the most prolonged drought period in the 1500s. Moreover, his model demonstrated, human-caused warming is the basis for no less than 42 percent of the current drought condition.

In 2002, the Southwest, already caught in a drought, experienced what was reckoned to be the driest year ever recorded for the entire region. In the years since, overall precipitation in the Southwest has remained scattered and

scarce, such that the region is in what the scientific community recognizes as a megadrought. In 2019, there seemed to be a respite in that state of affairs, as California and most of the rest of the Southwest experienced what is considered to be in keeping with the traditional pattern of rain and snowfall. But with 2020, the dearth of rain resumed. Then in 2021, the conditions of 2002 were virtually replicated, qualifying the 22-year-long megadrought as the driest extended period known, that is going back to the point where such phenomenon can be measured by the tools available today, to around the Year 800.

Williams used tree rings and other indicators in his analysis, from which he was able to extrapolate soil moisture levels on a year-to-year basis going back roughly 1,200 years.

"A previous reconstruction back to 800CE indicated that the 2000–2018 soil moisture deficit in southwestern North America was exceeded during one megadrought in the late-1500s. Here, we show that after exceptional drought severity in 2021, ~19% of which

is attributable to anthropogenic climate trends, 2000–2021 was the driest 22-year period since at least 800," Williams and his co-authors Benjamin I. Cook and Jason E. Smerdon wrote in the study, titled *Rapid Intensification of the Emerging Southwestern North American Megadrought in 2020–2021*. "South-



A. Park Williams

western North America has been experiencing lower than average precipitation and higher temperatures since 2000. This emerging megadrought, spanning 2000–2001, has been the driest 22-year period since the year 800 and 19 percent of the drought severity in 2021 can be attributed to climate change. This drought will very likely persist through 2022, matching the duration of the late-1500s megadrought."

Williams went beyond the 19 percent figure for human contribution to the 2021 drought conditions, stating that 42 percent of the current megadrought can be laid at the feet of human-

caused climate change. It is through climate change that the Southwest is becoming ever drier, Williams said, and he predicted that what is already approaching a worst-case scenario might grow worse. He said with the deterioration of the Southwest's ecology as a consequence of the megadrought, people will need to expand their conception of how bad things will get.

"Western North America has seen near-persistent drought since the year 2000," Williams said. "We used climate observations, tree-ring records, land-surface modeling, and climate model simulations to find that human-caused warming put an otherwise moderate drought onto a megadrought trajectory in the first two decades of the 21st Century. Tree rings tell us that natural climate variability will continue to cause wild swings in western North American water availability. Climate models project that over the long term, drying baseline conditions will make it increasingly easy to slide into severe drought and increasingly difficult to emerge from severe drought."

Williams' assessment is more pessimistic now than it was previously. In 2015 he did not use the term megadrought, rather characterizing what he saw at that time as a

typical drought within the context of rising temperatures globally.

"We find that this drought, like any drought, is primarily caused by natural climate variability," he said in September 2015. "But the drought is worse because of global warming. Warming causes the atmosphere's ability to take water out of ecosystems to go up. The last four years of drought in California can be blamed about 15 percent on human-induced global warming, and the other 85 percent is due to natural variability."

Nevertheless, in September 2015, Williams was relatively confident things would bounce back, saying that regions tend to display "low-frequency variability in their rainfall, meaning that if it's wet, it's generally wet for a decade or more. If it's dry, it's usually dry for a decade or more. Now, the Southwest may have just finished what was a 16-year dry period, where everybody in the Southwest was thinking, "Oh my God, climate change is awful. It's made it so dry and hot here." But if we switch into a more El Niño type of climate for the next several years, then the southwest is going to get very wet, and suddenly there's going to be a lot of water that was not available before."

Nearly six-and-a-half

years and several surveys of the climate later, Williams is less sanguine.

Williams addressed the challenge of being a harbinger of bad news derived through his scientific endeavors in a circumstance in which a large segment of the public is, by its social, economic and political orientation, disinclined to hear what he has to report.

"As more and more people have learned about global warming, the issue has become increasingly politicized," Williams said. "It's very hard to be immune to that. It is almost as if you can accurately predict somebody's opinion about global warming based purely on which political party they align with. And that's too bad, because it's alienating many of us. The research is obviously very important, and we need a lot of people working on it, but it's becoming increasingly difficult to do the research, because the political situation has made it tougher to be funded. There are people in government who don't want to see this research done, and they have actively eliminated funding from us. They even take pride in cutting earth science budgets. It's something to brag about. Unfortunately, it's borderline corruption to do that."

-Mark Gutglueck

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FBN 20220000764 The following person is doing business as: OPTIMIST PACKAGING. 206 E MISSION BLVD POMONA, CA 91766; (PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS SAN BERNARDINO); MARTIN HERNANDEZ 206 E. MISSION BLVD POMONA, CA 91766. The business is conducted by: AN INDIVIDUAL. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ MARTIN HERNANDEZ, OWNER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: FEBRUARY 02, 2022 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022, 03/11/2022 CNBB7202206MT

FBN 20220000832 The following person is doing business as: SUBMARINO PACKAGING. 206 E MISSION BLVD POMONA, CA 91766; (PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS SAN BERNARDINO); (MARTIN HERNANDEZ 206 E MISSION BLVD POMONA, CA 91766. The business is conducted by: AN INDIVIDUAL.

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The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ MARTIN HERNANDEZ, OWNER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: FEBRUARY 02, 2022 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022, 03/11/2022 CNBB7202205MT

FBN 20220000844 The following person is doing business as: ONTARIO MOTOR INN. 1522 W MISSION BLVD ONTARIO, CA 91762; (PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS SAN BERNARDINO); JAISHIV BHOLE, LLC 1522 W MISSION BLVD ONTARIO, CA 91762 The business is conducted by: A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ SUNIKUMAR B. DHANGAR, MANAGING MEMBER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: FEBRUARY 02, 2022 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022, 03/11/2022 CNBB7202206MT

FBN 20220000841 The following person is doing business as: DAESUNG TECH LTD. 1461 N VISTA AVE APT #1 RIALTO, CA 92376; (PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS SAN BERNARDINO); SHATOYA D HARRISON 1461 N VISTA AVE APT #1 RIALTO, CA 92376. The business is conducted by: AN INDIVIDUAL. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ SHATOYADHARRISON, OWNER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino

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on: FEBRUARY 02, 2022 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022, 03/11/2022 CNBB7202205MT

FBN 20220000828 The following person is doing business as: MOUNTAIN JEM HOME INSPECTIONS, LLC. 255 OAK DRIVE SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92427; (PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS SAN BERNARDINO); MOUNTAIN JEM HOME INSPECTIONS, LLC 225 OAK DRIVE SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92427 The business is conducted by: A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ JASEN E. MATTINGLY, MANAGING MEMBER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: FEBRUARY 02, 2022 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022, 03/11/2022 CNBB7202204MT

FBN 20220000673 The following person is doing business as: CHOLO PIERCES & TATTOO STUDIO, LLC. 12333 ROSS PL YUCAIPA, CA 92399 PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS LOS ANGELES); CHOLO PIERCES & TATTOO STUDIO, LLC 12333 ROSS PL YUCAIPA, CA 92399 The business is conducted by: A LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ AMY D. VELAZCO, MANAGING MEMBER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: FEBRUARY 01, 2022 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself

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authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022, 03/11/2022 CNBB7202203MT

FBN 20220000712 The following person is doing business as: SERGIO'S DIRECT HIRE SERVICES. 16476 WINDCREST DR FONTANA, CA 92337; (PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS SAN BERNARDINO); SERGIO J MUNOZ 16476 WINDCREST DR. FONTANA, CA 92337. The business is conducted by: AN INDIVIDUAL. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ SERGIO J MUNOZ, OWNER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: FEBRUARY 01, 2022 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022, 03/11/2022 CNBB7202202IR

FBN 20220000661 The following person is doing business as: VILLANUEVA GENERAL CONSTRUCTION. 5867 REBECCA ST RIVERSIDE, CA 92509; (PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS SAN BERNARDINO); AURELIO VILLANUEVA 5867 REBECCA ST RIVERSIDE, CA 92509; YOLANDA REYNOSO 5867 REBECCA ST RIVERSIDE, CA 92509. The business is conducted by: A GENERAL PARTNERSHIP. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ AURELIO VILLANUEVA, GENERAL PARTNER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: JANUARY 31, 2022 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 02/18/2022, 02/25/2022, 03/04/2022, 03/11/2022 CNBB7202201IR

Seizing Gomez's Computers & Phone Had Nothing To Do With Search Warrant's Council Meeting Disruption Pretext, Lawsuit Asserts from page 5

defendants even seized Gomez's driver's license, depriving her of the ability to drive, which she needs to do for work. [The] defendants also took Gomez's computers, which contain materials needed for the

online doctoral program Gomez is enrolled in at California Baptist University in Riverside. This seizure was also not authorized by the warrant."

According to the lawsuit, "The County of San Bernardino has an unconstitutional, deeply ingrained policy or custom of holding onto people's personal electronic equipment such as phones and computers for several months or more when seized as part of an investigation, despite having the

ability to quickly copy the data and return the items, thus unreasonably depriving individuals of their property under the Fourth Amendment. The true purpose behind [the] defendants' actions in seizing [the] plaintiff's electronic devices was not to obtain information related to a legitimate investigation, but instead to deter and punish [the] plaintiff for exercising her First Amendment rights, as well as to control and tamper with evidence showing the illegal

actions of sheriff's deputies at the Victorville City Council meeting on July 20, 2021. The county also has an unconstitutional, deeply ingrained policy or custom of unlawfully seizing personal electronic devices containing evidence that is incriminating to the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, which the county desires to control the dissemination of, and/or tamper with, as [the] defendants did in this case."

ous lawsuit, which languished while Gomez failed to act in accordance with the court's orders, the milestones in the case have been met so far while Pease has been representing her. Cahow, Gagne, Quiroz McGee and Wickum were properly served on August 13, 2021. The case is being heard by Judge Bernal. Judge Bernal ordered both parties to seek mediation of the case by February 27. If mediation does not result in a

settlement, the matter is to proceed toward trial, with amended pleadings due by April 4, 2022. The discovery cut-off date is February 6, 2023, with all pre-trial motions due by April 17, 2023. The last date to conduct a settlement conference is set for February 27, 2023, one year after the last date those mediations are to begin. A final pretrial conference is set for May 22, 2023, with trial set to being on June 23, 2023.

-Mark Gutglueck

Upland Elects To Keep Its Essentially Logical & For The Most Part Symmetrical Voting Districts *from page 6*

mayor, that being Debbie Stone, with whom she was at odds.

Elliott in 2018, however, did not allow herself to be lulled into a state of complacency and comfort by virtue of being in office until 2020. Looking ahead at what the political and practical reality was, she declared her candidacy for the Upland District 2 council post in 2018, despite yet having two years in office left on her then-current at-large term. Ultimately, perhaps because the majority of the city's voters were more in consonance with Elliott's stance with regard to at least some of the issues the city had faced in the previous two years than were her council colleagues, she was victorious in the District 2 Council race while Filippi and Timm were

turned out of office in their respective contests. Two years later, Elliott's other council nemesis, Mayor Debbie Stone, was rejected by the city's voters as well.

With that chapter behind it, the Upland City Council this year took up the task of determining not only how the city's council districts would be drawn but how many there were to be.

With the onset of a council district system in Upland in 2018, the at-large mayor's post was retained while the remaining four council positions were made into ones representing four geographical districts – northwest, northeast, southwest and southeast. On the table this time around was dispensing with the mayor's post as one directly voted upon by the city's voters in an at-large election and instead making five council positions and thereafter empowering the council to confer upon one of its five members the honorific of serving as mayor, which would involve presiding over the council's meetings

and representing the city at ribbon cuttings, groundbreaking and the like. Ultimately, the council rejected that option.

Thus, up for discussion was what configuration the four districts that remain were to take.

The city's original district map basically used San Antonio Avenue and Foothill Boulevard as its major dividing lines.

The First District was located west of San Antonio and north of Foothill.

The Second District's western border consists of San Antonio. On its southwestern side, its southern boundary runs along Arrow Highway below Foothill Boulevard and then zigs north up Euclid to 14th Street and across to Grove Avenue at the eastern border of the city with Rancho Cucamonga.

The northern border of both the First and Second districts is the city limit/border with San Antonio Heights along 24th Street.

The Third District has as its western border

the city's boundary with Claremont/Los Angeles County and Montclair. Its northern boundary is Foothill Boulevard. Its southern boundary runs along the city's southern city limits, those being the boundary with Montclair on its west side and the San Bernardino Freeway/Ontario City Limits on its east side. Its eastern boundary is San Antonio from Foothill Boulevard to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Line, then eastward to Euclid and down Euclid to the Freeway.

The Fourth District is bounded by 14th Street from Euclid Avenue to Edgefield, south to Edgington Street and further east to Crawford Avenue, south to 13th Street and then east to Alta Avenue and south to Anita Street and running east, thereafter south on Grove Avenue at the city limits/border with Rancho Cucamonga to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Rail Line west to the Ontario/Upland boundary and south to Richland Street where the district line runs westerly until meeting

the San Bernardino Freeway and heading west to Euclid Avenue, taking in the row of houses on the west side of Euclid north to the Santa Fe Burlington Rail Line and then west to San Antonio Avenue. Thereafter, the District 4 boundary heads east on Arrow Highway until it reaches the midway line between Palm Avenue and Laurel Avenue, heading east on 11th Street to Euclid, then north on Euclid to 14th Street.

The map chosen by the city council will add the residential neighborhood between San Antonio Avenue and Euclid Avenue between 21st Street and 24th Street. It detracts the same neighborhood from District 2, while adding the neighborhoods between 14th Street and Foothill Boulevard to give District 2 an even southern border along Foothill Boulevard all the way to the boundary with Rancho Cucamonga. The Third District has gained the neighborhood lying between San Antonio and Euclid between Foothill and 11th Street, much of

which consists of the Upland High School campus. The Third District lost that portion of its former expanse south of the Santa Fe Burlington Northern rail line and between San Antonio and Euclid north of the city limits. The Fourth District loses its current expanse north of Foothill Boulevard to 14th Street such that its northern border is now Foothill Boulevard on its east side, but it is to gain the portion of the Third District south of the Santa Fe Burlington Northern rail line and between San Antonio and Euclid north of the city limits.

Upland was forced into accepting a by-district voting system to encourage Latino representation on the city council. According to the National Demographics Corporation, 55 percent of residents in District 3 are Hispanic. They are currently represented by a Latino, Carlos Garcia. District 4 is 57 percent Latino by population and is also represented by a Hispanic, Rudy Zuniga.

-Mark Gutglueck

In Little More Than A Year, Valdivia Went From Being The Emperor Of San Bernardino To Its Pariah *from page 6*

In 2018, Valdivia ran for mayor, challenging the incumbent, Carey Davis. Valdivia emerged victorious in that November's contest with 19,155 votes or 52.51 percent to Davis's 17,327 votes or 47.49 percent.

At that point, Valdivia enjoyed the support of both of the council's two newly-elected members, whom he had supported in the just concluded election, Ted Sanchez in the city's First Ward and Sandra Ibarra in the Second Ward. He also had the support of incumbent Fifth Ward Councilman Henry Nickel and incumbent Sixth Ward Councilwoman Bessie Richard. His opposition on the council at that time consisted of Fourth District Councilman

Fred Shorett and Seventh District Councilman Jim Mulvihill, who collectively lacked the political muscle to effectively oppose him. In May 2019, a special election was held to select Valdivia's replacement as Third Ward councilor, as he had been obliged to resign that post to move into the mayor's slot. Prevailing in that contest was Juan Figueroa, whom Valdivia had heavily supported by transferences of money from his own campaign account.

Immediately upon Figueroa coming into office, Valdivia effectuated the removal of City Manager Andrea Travis-Miller, whom he considered to be a vestige of the Davis Administration. He thereafter installed Travis-Miller's assistant city manager, Teri Ledoux, into the position of city manager, in doing so boosting the salary of the soon-to- retire Ledoux so that she would be able to draw an annual pension approach-

ing \$190,000, which was roughly \$70,000 more than she would have otherwise received. Through Ledoux's promotion, Valdivia effectuated a virtual takeover of the city by which he had political as well as administrative/managerial control.

Valdivia's time in the catbird seat would be short-lived.

In 2015, a citizen-sponsored initiative calling for the legalization of medical marijuana sales in the city passed. In 2016, the passage of Proposition 64 legalized the sale of marijuana for its intoxicative effect in California. A frenzy among would-be marijuana entrepreneurs seeking licensing and permits to open dispensaries, pot shops and operate cultivation facilities ensued. Many of those began providing money to Valdivia in what those marijuana business applicants later acknowledged were either or both implicit and

explicit quid pro quos, with the understanding, or what they thought was an understanding, that their businesses would obtain permits to operate in the city.

What was going on did not remain under wraps for long, particularly when Valdivia failed to deliver on the promises he made to some of those who had paid him, and they began to talk openly about how the mayor had crossed them up. Moreover, word surfaced that other individuals and companies with proposals before the city unrelated to cannabis enterprises had either made political donations to Valdivia or payments to his consulting company with the expectation that their contracts, franchises or projects would be approved by the city council and city administration he controlled.

Before the end of Summer 2019, Valdivia alienated first Ibarra and then Nickel. In October 2019, Valdivia was on

the outs with Sanchez. At that point, the only reliable votes on the council he could count on were those of Figueroa and Richard, while he found himself unable to muster the support of Mulvihill, Shorett, Ibarra, Sanchez and Nickel for any of his initiatives. Having effectively lost control of the council, Valdivia, growing increasingly frustrated, began to lash out at city staff, ultimately alienating then-City Manager Ledoux and City Attorney Sonia Carvalho, both of whom were once safely within his camp.

In January 2020, Mirna Cisneros, Valdivia's constituent service representative, and Karen Cervantes, his special assistant, went public with accounts of how Valdivia had pressured them to have sex with him. Cisneros related how Valdivia had solicited and received bribes. She also laid out how he used city money to travel nationally and in-

ternationally on business unrelated to the city, which included raising money for himself or his future political campaigns. Thereafter, Jackie Aboud, Valdivia's field representative, came forward to say that Valdivia had squeezed her to have sexual relations with him, and that Valdivia had used his influence as mayor to provide favorable city treatment to his donors and supporters, while working to prevent city services from being rendered to his constituents who were not supporters, in particular those in the city's Fourth and Seventh Wards, represented by his two longstanding rivals on the council, Shorett and Mulvihill. Alissa Payne, whom Valdivia had appointed to the city's Arts and Historical Preservation Commission and the San Bernardino Parks, Recreation and Community Services Commission, publicly surfaced

Continued on Page 12

Ibarra Questions Whether The End Of Ridding The City Of Valdivia Justifies The Means Of Altering The City's Electoral Process *from page 11*

with accounts that were in some fashion similar to those of Cisneros, Cervantes and Aboud with regard to sexual advances the mayor had made toward her. Don Smith, who had worked on Valdivia's campaign for mayor and was subsequently hired by the city to serve as Valdivia's part time field representative, offered specific accounts of bribetaking by the mayor, including one of a kickback that had originated from holders of the city's tow truck franchises, consisting of a cash-stuffed envelope given to the mayor in Smith's presence. Matt Brown, who was brought in to serve as Valdivia's chief of staff in August 2019, roughly a month after his original chief of staff, Bilal Essayli, resigned, stated that he was being retaliated against by Valdivia for having sought to protect Cisneros, Cervantes and Aboud in the face of Valdivia's treatment of them, and he retained Tristan Pelayes, the lawyer who was representing Cervantes, Cisneros, Aboud, Payne, and Smith. Ultimately, Aboud, Brown, Cervantes, Cisneros and Smith sued the city over the ordeals they had with Valdivia.

In the 2020 election cycle, Valdivia's political affiliate and council ally, Juan Figueroa, was reelected, and Valdivia's political affiliate and council ally Bes-sine Richard was voted out of office, replaced by Kimberly Calvin. Both Henry Nickel, who had evolved into one of Valdivia's political foes, and Jim Mulvihill, who had never been aligned with Valdivia, were likewise chased from office by the city's voters, replaced, respectively, by Ben Reynoso and Damon Alexander. Valdivia's expectation was

that Alexander would become his ally. Alexander, however, has hopes of eventually becoming mayor himself, and has steered clear of any consistent connection with Valdivia. Calvin very early on clashed with Valdivia, and Reynoso has proven to be a more committed antagonist to the mayor than was Nickel. After the new council was seated in December 2020, Figueroa's was the only vote of consistent support on the council that Valdivia could count upon.

Calls have been made for the San Bernardino Police Department, the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office, the California Attorney General's Office, the FBI or the U.S. Attorney's Office to dig into Valdivia's financial relationships with those doing business with the city, indict him, convict him, remove him from office and imprison him. In response, Valdivia, his supporters and his legal representatives disparage those calls as delusional.

There have been recurrent reports that a multitude of challengers are lining up to run against Valdivia later this year, including former City Attorney Jim Penman, who was once one of Valdivia's primary supporters; Alexander; former San Bernardino Human Services Director Helen Tran; Treasure Ortiz, who ran against Figueroa in 2019; and potentially Sanchez.

Valdivia, meanwhile, appears prepared to take on any political challenger in this year's mayoral election. As of December 31, 2021, according to the California 460 campaign funding documents he filed with the San Bernardino City Clerk's Office on January 31, Valdivia has \$317,426.56 in his political war chest. Donors, many of whom have little or no conception of the degree to which Valdivia's control over the city council has eroded and believe that as mayor he yet has the reach and power to order city staff to make recommenda-

tions in accordance with his dictates and influence the city council or a majority thereof to vote as he directs, continue to write \$1,000, \$1,500, \$2,000, \$2,500, \$3,000, and \$4,000 checks to his campaign fund, indeed ones for as much as \$4,900, which is the maximum amount allowable for a single person to donate under the city's campaign funding limitation law.

Valdivia can use that money to conduct polling, run radio ads, buy billboard space, secure local television ads, purchase endorsements on slate mailers sent to voters in the weeks prior to an election, print and send mailers touting himself and the job he has done as mayor along with his accomplishments, print and send attack mailers dwelling on the shortcomings of his opponents, pay for handbills that can be distributed door-to-door or defray the cost of phone banks to call voters and importune them to cast their votes for him.

Recognizing this, Shorett, Calvin, Reynoso, Sanchez, Ibarra and Alexander have cast about for a way to undercut Valdivia. On December 1, 2021, the city council voted to censure Valdivia for utilizing \$2,134.08 in public funds to design and print invitations to a reception following his state of the city address last June that served as a campaign rally and then spending another \$546.33 for bulk mailing the invitations. In that same censure vote, the council also castigated Valdivia for charging the city for a hotel stay and meal in San Diego on September 20-22, 2019; a hotel stay in Irvine on September 10-11, 2020; parking at the Mission Inn in Riverside on October 27, 2020; parking at West Beverly Hills Hotel on January 17, 2021; a hotel stay and meal in Irvine on March 8-9, 2021; a hotel stay in Irvine on March 18-19, 2021; meals in Nevada on March 22-23, 2021; a meal in Newport Beach on March 23, 2021; and

a meal and hotel stay in Irvine on April 13-14, 2021, all of which were related to his efforts to raise campaign donations.

The censure had no practical impact upon Valdivia, other than to express across the board disapproval of his behavior, as the council does not have the authority to remove him from office. The censure does, nonetheless, provide a potential political opponent with an issue to campaign against him on.

Last month, on January 19, in an effort to disincentivize Valdivia from running for reelection, the council voted 5-to-2, with Ibarra and Figueroa dissenting, to reduce the \$106,793 annual salary paid to the person holding the mayor's position to \$50,000, effective next December following this year's mayoral election. Ibarra opposed the reduction to \$50,000, indicating she wanted City Manager Robert Field to carry out a wider survey of cities that function under the council-manager form of government and use that as the basis for reducing the mayor's stipend, such that the reduction could have been more substantial, dropping the mayor's compensation to as low as \$500-to-\$1,500 per month, or approximately \$6,000 to \$18,000 per year.

That vote left in place the roughly \$9,000 in other governmental entity stipends, \$25,000 in benefits and the annual \$30,000 retirement contribution the mayor receives, such that the San Bernardino Mayor serving after the November election will receive a total annual compensation of about \$114,000.

The future mayoral salary reduction has not dissuaded Valdivia from seeking reelection this year.

More recently, on February 2, the city council considered placing on the June 7 ballot a referendum on whether the mayor in San Bernardino should remain as one independently elected at-large or whether the independent mayoral

position should be eliminated. The alternative the council was proposing was that the council would select from its own ranks someone to assume the mayoral honorific on a yearly basis, rotating the office among themselves. If the council succeeded in placing the measure on the ballot, and if the city's voters approved eliminating the directly-elected mayoral position, Valdivia's monetary advantage vis-à-vis his electioneering fund would be rendered moot, and his tenure as mayor would come to an end.

When the matter came up for a vote on February 2, Shorett, Sanchez, Calvin and Figueroa supported putting the measure on the ballot. Ibarra and Alexander voted against doing so. For a reason that Reynoso did not explain, he said he believed he had a conflict of interest with regard to such a measure and he abstained. The vote in favor of placing the measure on the ballot passed 4-to-2-to-1.

The following week, Valdivia, who was not in attendance at the February 2 meeting, used his veto authority applicable to any vote involving seven councilors that does not pass with five votes in assent to prevent the measure from being placed on the ballot.

This week, the council brought the matter back for a second consideration.

Reynoso, indicating he had determined he did not have a conflict with regard to the matter, voted, joining with Shorett, Sanchez and Calvin in supporting it. Figueroa, however, defected from his previous support. Rather than voting with Alexander and Ibarra against putting the measure on the ballot, however, Figueroa abstained. Thus, the vote to give the city's voters the opportunity to eliminate the mayoral position with a measure to be voted upon in June passed once more 4-to-2-to-1. Valdivia again utilized his veto authority, nixing the referendum.

Ibarra, whose vote

was critical in keeping the measure from proceeding, explained ahead of the vote that she thought it a mistake to get rid of the directly-elected mayoral position because of the ongoing discontent with Valdivia. Ibarra, who has been at odds with the mayor, essentially warned against tossing the baby out with the bathwater.

"This is strictly political," said Ibarra. "This is just a way to get rid of our current mayor. However, the voters have that opportunity come June. That is up to the voters. If the voters decide to not have a mayor at-large, just know this is the last time you'll be voting for a mayor, and you will no longer have a mayor to vote for. After this, it will be up to us, up here, the council members, to select a different mayor every year without the vote of the residents of the city. If that is what the voters want, then you will have that opportunity. You will no longer be able to vote for a mayor at-large after this. And some of the people who are running for mayor know this perfectly well, and it is specific to the current mayor. It is not for the well-being of this city. I went to three out of six community meetings. The residents were specifically asked, 'Would you like to keep a mayor at-large?' It was said, 'Yes.' That's why it was kept when the amendment was done for the charter. Do not say that is not what the community wanted. However, if that's what you guys want to vote for in June, to get rid of your mayor at-large and your power to vote for a mayor, then go ahead. Because I am in the minority if you want to do that. Go ahead, and just know that I am telling you it is. This is a political maneuver to just get rid of the current mayor. What are they [those advocating the removal of the mayor's position] saying? 'Out of eight candidates for mayor, none of them are good enough to take him out.' That's what they're saying."