

## San Bernardino Has Burned Through \$1M & Counting On Valdivia Defense

Nearly six months after John Valdivia's departure as San Bernardino Mayor, the city he formerly headed is yet seeking to defend more than a half dozen lawsuits brought against it over his actions while in office.

With the cost of defending those lawsuits now having grown toward or exceeding the million-dollar mark, a former member of the city council is calling

upon his one-time colleagues and successors to stanch the hemorrhaging of red ink and settle the cases to close the chapter on that phase of the city's history.

Valdivia, who was first elected to the city council to represent the Third Ward in 2011 and was seated on the council in 2012, was reelected in 2015 without opposition and then ran successfully for Mayor in 2018 when the city had

transitioned to even-numbered year elections, defeating the incumbent, Carey Davis.

In the initial stages of his mayoralty, Valdivia had cultivated a five-member ruling coalition on the council, consisting of his presumed allies, First Ward Councilman Ted Sanchez, Second Ward Councilwoman Sandra Ibarra, Fifth Ward Councilman Henry Nickel, Sixth Ward Councilwoman



**John Valdivia**

Bessine Richard and in May 2019 following a special election to fill the gap on the council that came about because of

Valdivia's resignation to move into the mayoral post, Third Ward Councilman Juan Figueroa. At that point, Valdivia's rivals on the council, Fourth Ward Councilman Fred Shorett and Seventh Ward Councilman Jim Mulvihill, were unable to effectively oppose his aggressive agenda, much of which was intended to solidify his political and administrative hold on the city and reward his See P 2

## Mojave Desert Land Trust Gets \$3.19M State Grant To Enlarge Native Seed Bank

A \$3.19 million state grant awarded to a San Bernardino County-based environmental group will be used to expand the warehouse of seeds it is safeguarding to head off the extinction of plants native to Southern California's deserts.

On May 25, the California Wildlife Conservation Board set aside \$3.19 million as part of California's 30 X 30 Initiative to fund the expansion of the Mojave Desert Seed Bank.

The grant will be put to use, a spokeswoman for the Mojave Desert Land Trust said, "to help conservationists tackle the urgent need for native seed to conserve the California deserts' unique biodiversity."

Desert ecosystems make up approximately one quarter of the state. Those ecosystems are threatened by significant drought, severe weather, and precipitous loss of habitat and wildlife. Biologists and botanists have identified seed banking as crucial to ensuring the survival of California's ecosystems by making seed available for the restoration and enhancement of rare, threatened and culturally important species and those species' habitats. Seed banking also plays an important role in long-term conservation as the state aims to protect 30 percent of California's land and water by 2030.

Environmentalists say the region needs more resources to build capacity and collaboration among those with ecological preservation priorities. "Seed See P 6

## Redlands Hires Woman Chief As Antidote To Police Command Staff's Chauvinism

Amid publicly unresolved questions relating to improper and what some have referred to as "sexually coercive" activity involving the department's former deputy chief and following the abrupt resignation of Police Chief Christopher Catren earlier this year, Redlands has promoted Commander Rachel Tolber to serve as the Redlands Police Department's chief of police.



**Rachel Tolber**

ment's chief of police.

Tolbert has been serving as acting police chief

during the three months following the not-fully-explained departure of Catren in March.

Catren had risen rapidly in the department, virtually from the time he was hired as a sworn officer in 1996. Catren began with the department as its first crime analyst, a nonsworn position, in 1994, while he was yet a student at San Bernardino State Uni-

versity pursuing a degree in business administration.

After an obligatory stint as a patrol officer, he worked his way quickly up the ranks as an investigator, training officer, field supervisor, detective and sergeant. His supervisory positions included investigations, patrol, field training coordinator and reserve police officer co-

ordinator.

In 2007, Catren was promoted to lieutenant and managed the investigative services bureau, the patrol services bureau and the special operations bureau while at that rank.

In addition to his bachelor's degree in business administration, Catren obtained a master's in public administration from See P 2

## A Year After His First Go-Round Over Commission Appointments, Marquez Again Raises Concerns

For the second time in less than a year, Chino Community Services Commissioner Greg Marquez has brought his city's municipal board appointment process into question.

In this go-round, he is pressing the city to make explicit the criteria used in making the appointments, while simultaneously seeking to impose

term limits on those who volunteer for and are appointed to commission and committee posts, with a possible carryover to who is elected to the city council.

Some question whether his suggestions are earnestly and sincerely made or whether they are intended to advance his own ambition.

On May 16, Marquez

called upon the city council to give close scrutiny to the ordinance relating to service on city panels.

Marquez's request came during an item which dealt with extending the terms of the city's commissioners and boosting the stipend of the commission on which Marquez is a member. Mar- See P 3

## Ramos's Warehouse Bill On Hold Until Next Year & Maybe Forever

It has turned out that the competing warehouse construction regulation bills brought forth by two of San Bernardino County's legislators will be placed on hold at least until next year.

While both of the bills Assembly Bill 1748 introduced by Assemblyman James Ramos and Assembly Bill 1000, sponsored by Assembly-

woman Eloise Gómez Reyes were ostensibly aimed at the same goal, they were different in tenor and in much of their substance. While each was represented as imposing heretofore non-existent regulations on warehouse development, reform advocates considered Gómez Reyes's version to be sincerely aimed at creat- See P 3

## Ontario Chaffey Community Show Band June 2023 Concert Will Commemorate Mercer

The musicians of the Ontario Chaffey Community Show Band and Gary & Miriam Keith are proud to present the "Centennial Tribute to Jack Mercer" on Monday June 19, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. in Gardiner W. Spring Auditorium located on the campus of Chaffey High School, 1250 N. Euclid Ave. in Ontario. Early concert goers are invited to arrive at 7:00

p.m. to be entertained by the "Woodwind Celebration" ensemble in the lobby while enjoying complimentary coffee and cookies. The performance is FREE to the public.

R. Jack Mercer came to Ontario, California in 1957 to work as the director of bands and instrumental music at Chaffey High School. He was a pioneer in host-

ing an annual parade and field tournament in Ontario, the first of its kind in the Inland Valley. In 1966, his band was selected to perform at the Coliseum for the halftime show at the Pro Bowl. Since his arrival to Ontario, Jack had an influence on nearly every band director in the Inland Valley. Also, he authored several books designed to help direc-

tors become successful in building and maintaining effective band programs. After his retirement from education in 1985, Jack founded and directed the Chaffey Ontario Community Show Band for the next 26 years. His tireless efforts to give back to his community has resulted in yearly concert series provided free of cost to the citizens of Ontario

and surrounding communities.

Jack Mercer was recognized throughout Southern California as an icon in music education. To acknowledge the man and his contributions to the arts for over a half-century, the City of Ontario named a bandstand located on Euclid Avenue and "C" Street in his honor. In addition, the band See P 3

## As Mayor, Valdivia Sought To Dominate Everyone - The Council, His Own Staff & City Management - Overstepping His Political And Administrative Authority *from front page*

political backers with project, contract and franchise approvals. By the end of summer/early fall of 2019, however, Valdivia had alienated Nickel, Ibarra and Sanchez, such that his control over the city slipped from his grasp. Coupled with the August 2019 resignation of his chief of staff, Bill Essayli, Valdivia began pressuring his staff members to help him reestablish his position of preeminence in the city, often in ways many felt improper. By the fall of 2019, Valdivia no longer had five reliable votes on the council but only two – those of Richard and Figueroa – to support whatever he was attempting to achieve.

There followed a series of revelations as commercial cannabis/marijuana entrepreneurs vying for licenses to operate in the city began to speak openly and bitterly about how the mayor had promised, in exchange for cash, to provide their businesses with operation licenses and permits. An employee in Valdivia's office, Mirna

Cisneros, related how Valdivia made sexual advances to her and she related how he misused city funds to engage in travel and activity that had nothing to do with city business. Cisneros further revealed the mayor was taking money from those with business before the city. Another employee of the mayor's office, Karen Cervantes, related how the mayor had made sexual advances toward her. Valdivia's field representative, Jackie Aboud, likewise said Valdivia had pressured her to accommodate his sexual needs. Alissa Payne, a single mother whom Valdivia appointed to two city commissions, said Valdivia had made similar indecent overtures to her. Valdivia's field representative, Don Smith, brought to light how he had been present while Valdivia made a late night rendezvous with a city tow service franchise holder who handed Valdivia an envelope stuffed with cash. Matt Brown, who had succeeded Essayli as Valdivia's chief of staff, came forward to say that Valdivia attempted to have him make fraudulent unfavorable work reviews of Cisneros, Cervantes, Aboud and Smith to justify their firings and discredit them with regard to the allegations they had made. The mayor's staff related how they were instructed

by Valdivia to withhold city improvements and infrastructure provision to those areas of the city – Wards Four and Seven – represented by Valdivia's main council rivals Shorett and Mulvihill, and later from wards One, Two and Five, represented by Sanchez, Ibarra and Nickel, after



**Helen Tran**

Valdivia's falling out with them.

Another casualty of Valdivia's behavior was then-Human Resources Director Helen Tran. In 2006, the then-29-year-old Tran had started with the City of San Bernardino as the executive assistant to the human resources director. Two years later, she was promoted to the position of human resources analyst. In 2013, she was promoted to human resources division manager and in 2016 more than two years before Valdivia became mayor, she acceded to the position of director of human resources. Initially, while Cisneros, Cervantes and Aboud were still employed by the city and they first registered objections with the human resour-

ces department about the mistreatment they were being subjected to, Tran was at a loss as to how to deal with the challenge. Those lodging the complaints were employees of the mayor's office, ones who, even though they were city employees, served, basically, at the pleasure of the mayor, who had the ultimate political power in the city. If she intervened by injecting herself into the function of the mayor's office – over which the mayor had absolute autonomy – she put herself at risk, since there was the possibility the mayor might join forces with a majority of the city council to direct the city manager to have her terminated. It was only after a second, then a third, then a fourth complaint about Valdivia's caddish comportment was registered with her department that she came to recognize that she was not being faced with an indolent or incompetent but rather a malevolent boss who was misusing his political position to intimidate city staff. In this case, the offending party was the mayor who was her own political master. Tran was dealing with an intractable problem, which, if dealt with forthrightly, might lead to the destruction of her own career. In what some said was an adroit or clever or shrewd move

has been dismissed by a cross section of the Redlands community based on the timing of other parallel developments, including investigations launched into the department by both the FBI and city management. At issue in those investigations was a claim that several of the department's senior ranking members had engaged in the destruction of evidence and had either encouraged or ordered other department members to destroy evidence and doctor official police reports in such a way that evidence of certain criminality would not come to light. At focus in that investigation were former Deputy

Chief Mike Reiss, Commander Stephen Crane and Sergeant Kyle Alexander. Some department members insinuated that Reiss and Crane could not have been involved in such a cover-up without the implicit knowledge of the police chief.

At the heart of the matter was an allegation of gross sexual harassment of at least one female employee by Reiss. With the department reeling from the implications of that ignominy, it appears that a decision was made to bypass the logical heir to the police chief's position, Deputy Chief Travis Martinez, in favor of Tolber.

Tolber has been with the department since

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10808 Foothill Blvd., Suite 160-446

Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730

SBCSentinel@yahoo.com

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and which others said was cowardly and unprincipled, she chose not to mix it up with Valdivia and in October 2019 simply jumped ship, leaving the post of San Bernardino's human services director to take on the human resources director/risk manager assignment with the City of West Covina when that position came available and was offered to her. In doing so, she accepted a reduction of her salary before benefits from \$150,824.46 to \$135,069.90. Nevertheless, doing so was for her more than a worthwhile trade-off, figuring in the reduction in stress she achieved by getting out from a position between the mayor and his abused employees and the pitfalls that existed in having to continue to deal with the circumstance in San Bernardino.

Meanwhile, at San

Bernardino City Hall, or at the neighboring Vanir Tower, which sufficed as City Hall, given that the actual City Hall had been shuttered because of its seismic instability, life was growing insufferable for Cisneros, Cervantes, Aboud, Brown and other members of the mayor's staff such as his secretary Renee Brizuela and Alexander Cousins, a paid intern. As 2020 approached, Valdivia grew insistent that his staff work on political campaigns of the council members he considered part of his team who were up for reelection in that year's election – Richards and Figueroa – and on behalf of the candidates he was supporting in the races against Mulvihill and Nickel, those being David Mlynarski and Peter Torres, respectively.

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## For Many, Catren's Claim That He Was Retiring For Medical Reasons Did Not Have The Ring Of Truth *from front page*

California State University, San Bernardino. He graduated from the California Police Officers Standards and Training Command College in 2012. He was promoted to commander in 2013 and oversaw each of the department's divisions.

On December 20, 2017, following the retirement of former Police Chief Mark Garcia, he was promoted into the position of chief of police.

Catren was formerly the San Bernardino

County Police Chiefs' Association president, a member of the League of California Cities Board of Directors and was named president of the California Police Chiefs Association in February 2022. He was still in that position when on March 2 of this year he announced his retirement as police chief.

Accompanying the announcement was a cover story to the effect that Catren's retirement was precipitated by a back injury, which more than a dozen of the department's officers said was an absolute canard and which large numbers of the city's residents saw through at once. The back injury rationale

ship in the Redlands city manager's office. She is a California Police Officers Standards and Training Command College graduate.

Earlier this year, she was leading the department's special services bureau. With Catren's retirement, she was tapped to serve as the interim chief while a determination was made on who would be brought in to replace Catren as the full-fledged police chief. Amidst an atmosphere in which male chauvinism was the issue de jour at the Redlands Police Department, Tolber was selected for the temporary

1998. She worked her way up the department's assignment ladder, having worked patrol and as the department's firearms proficiency trainer and armorer, field training officer, detective, patrol supervisor, investigations supervisor, crisis negotiator, and professional standards/internal affairs officer.

As what was the department's then-highest ranking distaff member, Tolber was given the assignment of leading the Redlands Citizen Volunteer Park Rangers squad. She is credited with co-founding the Redlands Police and Corrections Team.

At one point, Tolber did an executive intern-

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**Show Band To Play Director's Favorite Tunes At June Concert** *from front page*

building on the campus of Chaffey High School was re-named the Jack Mercer Music Hall.

The Show Band will present a repertoire of

band director. It will be conducted by Assistant Director Pat Arnold who was one of Jack's students.

Mike Pfister will perform a trumpet solo in "You Made Me Love You." Trumpeter Larry Cariato will be featured on a special presenta-

on a trumpet gifted to him by Maestro Mercer.

Dancer Kathy Soderlund will dance to "Tea For Two." Two of Jack's favorite singers were Marilynne Sherwood and Brian Detwiler. Marilynne will sing "June In January," "You'll Never Know," and "That Old

You Are" and Francisco Mowatt will perform a violin solo to "On The Sunny Side of the Street."

The song "Stardust" had a special place in Mercer's heart. Trumpet soloist Steve Collins will seek to do justice to that piece, as well as to

complement of musicians will offer a rendition of "The Bandmaster," written in 2004 by Gabe Petrocelli for Maestro Mercer at the dedication of the Jack Mercer Music Hall.

The performance will be narrated by "The Friends of Ontario Chaffey Community Show Band" Board members Gary Keith and Dr. Kern Oduro.

The evening's entertainment is intended to be a fitting and memo-

orable celebration in a centennial tribute to Ontario's Music Maestro Jack Mercer. A special appeal is made to music aficionados to have them to invite family and friends. Support for the Show Band can be made by feeding the Hungry Tuba located in the lobby of the auditorium. The concert will be broadcast on local Ontario cable Channel 3. Check your cable listings for the date and time.



Jack Mercer's favorite songs.

The performance will begin with the Chaffey High School fight song, composed by Jack when he became the school's

tion of Jack's original composition entitled "A Flash of Light." He wrote the piece in 1947 as a graduate project for his masters degree. Cariato will perform the solo

Black Magic." Brian will be featured on "Bali Ha'i," "Autumn Leaves," and "The Way You Look Tonight."

John Holguin will sing "All The Things

"I Left My Heart In San Francisco," another Mercer favorite, this time accompanied by tenor saxophone soloist Pat Arnold.

The showband's full

**Marquez Questioning Chino's Commission Appointment Process** *from front page*

quez used the opportunity to suggest that holding commissioners to a certain number of terms might have the effect of getting more civic-minded residents involved with City Hall. The ordinance pertaining to commission and committee appointments was last

voted upon in 1990. The city has been somewhat self-conscious and deliberate with regard to Marquez's participation in city affairs.

Last July, after Marquez officially filed as a candidate for the District 2 city council slot in the November election, Marquez's colleague on the Community Services Commission, Brenda Strong, questioned whether Marquez's po-

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**Initially, Ramos Outgunned Gómez Reyes In Their Competing Warehouse Regulation Litigation** *from front page*

ing a meaningful buffer between warehouses and residents and characterized Ramos's bill as one intended to enable developers in creating more warehouses.

Gómez Reyes' Assembly Bill 1000 would have required 1,000 feet be maintained between new warehouses of 100,000 square feet or more and homes, apartments and other places where people congregate and spend a lot of time, such as day care centers and schools. It would have been applicable statewide.

Ramos's AB 1748 deals with the same topic as AB 1000, that being the proximity of warehouses to living quarters, educational facilities and the like. Ramos's version would impose a substantially less exacting limitation, however, specifically a 300-foot buffer between dwelling units or quarters or sites where

large numbers of people spend hours on a daily or semi-daily basis and warehouses of 400,000 square feet or more in



**Eloise Gómez Reyes**

Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

San Bernardino County is at the epicenter of warehouse development. Its location adjacent to Los Angeles County, home to the massive port facilities in San Pedro and Long Beach, where between 400 million tons and 700 million tons of cargo brought in by ship from Asia have been offloaded annually over each of the last five years, an endless parade of merchandise travels through San Bernardino County, making it America's major logistics hub.

There is at least 930 million square feet of warehousing in San Bernardino and River-

side counties at present, with more being built. There are 3,031 warehouses in San Bernardino County. In Ontario alone, there are 289 warehouses larger than 100,000 square feet. Reportedly, there are 142 warehouses in Fontana larger than 100,000 square feet. In Chino there are 118 warehouses larger than 100,000 square feet, 109 larger than 100,000 square feet in Rancho Cucamonga and 75 larger than 100,000 square feet in San Bernardino. Since 2015, 26 warehouse project applications have been processed and approved by the City of San Bernardino, entailing acreage under roof of 9,598,255 square feet, or more than one-third of a square mile, translating into 220.34 acres. After Ontario, Fontana, Chino, Rancho Cucamonga and San Bernardino, the city in San Bernardino County with the next largest number of warehouses of more than 100,000 square feet is Redlands, with 56, followed by Rialto with 47.

Fontana Mayor Acquannetta Warren has been so supportive of

warehouse development that she is known to those in favor of warehouse construction and those opposed to it as "Warehouse Warren."

In 2021, California Attorney General Rob Bonta sued Fontana over its affinity for warehouses, forcing the city into a settlement that calls for far greater regulation of the construction of logistics facilities in the city of 208,393. Increasingly, some elected officials, local residents and futurists are questioning whether warehouses constitute the highest and best use of the property available for development in the region. The glut of logistics facilities in the Inland Empire has some thinking their numbers are out of balance. In refuting the assertions of the proponents of warehouses that they constitute positive economic development, their detractors cite the relatively poor pay and benefits provided to those who work in distribution facilities, the large diesel-powered semi-trucks that are part of those operations with their unhealthy exhaust

emissions, together with the bane of traffic gridlock they create. In 2021 and 2022, the cities of Colton, Chino



**James Ramos**

and Redlands imposed a temporary moratorium on the further construction of warehouses in their jurisdictions. The San Bernardino City Council nearly did the same, when the five-sevenths majority vote of the council to do so fell short of the six-sevenths voter required to impose such a moratorium.

Both Ramos and Gómez Reyes reacted to their circumstance with their respective bills. Ramos's version was far friendlier to corporations, developers, landowners, real estate speculators, investors and businesses than was Gómez Reyes's attempt at legislation. Members of the Assembly Natu-

ral Resources Committee, noting that AB 1000 put a higher priority on protecting the interest of common citizens than did AB 1748, endorsed Gómez Reyes's bill over Ramos's. That was not enough, however.

Ramos, who is independently wealthy and has a political support network consisting of other members of the San Manuel Band of Mission Indians of which he is a member who are willing to make hefty political donations to other elected officials including members of the legislature, was able to outmaneuver Gómez Reyes in the competition to have his bill considered by the Assembly.

In April, the Assembly Local Government Committee took up dual consideration of AB 1000 and AB 1748. The committee could have sent both ahead in the lower house's deliberative process.

The Assembly Local Government Committee, chaired by Assemblywoman Cecilia M. Aguiar-Curry, generally concerns itself with evaluating legislation

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## Martinez Stepped Over In Favor Of Tolber *from page 2*

assignment to replace Catren as City Manager Charles Duggan and the city council cast about over what it was going to do to find someone to replace Catren. City officials, collectively, were caught flatfooted by the situation, as it was generally assumed that Catren was going to remain in place for another five, six or seven years. Replacing Catren with Deputy Chief Mike Reiss, whose action had precipitated the crisis and who was next in line along with Deputy Chief Travis Martinez to replace Catren, was out of the question. It was felt that a show of sensitivity by elevating a woman into the interim police chief's role, particularly given that it was to be a temporary assignment, would be appropriate, insofar as it was insensitivity that had delivered the department into the uncomfortable position it had come to occupy. In turning to Tolber, Deputy Chief Travis Martinez, was stepped over.

According to a lawsuit brought by community services officer/property and evidence technician Julie Salcido alleging sexual harassment and a claim against the city by another police department employee, forensic specialist Geneva Holzer, Reiss succeeded in pressuring Salcido to engage in sexual acts with him and sought but failed to have Holzer similarly accommodate him.

In December 2019, Holzer found a chair on which Salcida had spilled some of Reiss's semen after she performed oral sex on him in August 2019. After Holzer tested the chair and confirmed the stain in question was semen, she said she was told by Sergeant Kyle Alexander to "get rid of or destroy chair" and "to not be descriptive in my report and to send the report and photos of the chair directly to him over email." Further according to Holzer, Al-

exander "told me not to put anything in our evidence system photo wise and don't put the report into our report system." Holzer said the matter "was never reported up my chain of command except to Commander Crane" and "Reiss was told about this chair in 2019 and Reiss ordered this chair to be destroyed so it could never be discovered." Despite Reiss's order, Holzer said



**Mike Reiss**

she "had stored it in the vault in a secure location to maintain that it would not go missing or be destroyed." Holzer maintains that the department's organizational chart was such that she and Alexander reported to Commander Stephen Crane, who in turn was supposed to report to Deputy Chief Travis Martinez. With regard to the sexual activity in the office between Reiss and Salcido, the chair and the evidence it represented, Martinez was bypassed, according to Holzer.

"[T]his event was never reported up my chain of command or Sergeant Alexander's chain of command except to Commander Crane," according to Holzer. "Deputy Chief Martinez can confirm all of this information as he never knew about the chair as it was never reported to him. At the time, Deputy Chief Martinez should have been in Sgt. Alexander and Commander Crane's chain of command, but they instead most likely reported to Deputy Chief Reiss due to friendship and loyalty."

According to Holzer, upon her hiring as a forensic specialist in August 2018, there was immediate tension and apparent personality conflict between her and both Salcido, who was then a community services officer, and Eloise Tankersley, another fo-

rensic specialist. Holzer implied that her arrival at the department interrupted a circumstance in which Salcido and Tankersley were engaged in sexual activity with the department's sworn personnel in exchange for preferential treatment. Salcido in February 2019 was promoted to the position of property and evidence technician. Holzer suggested that during the initial stages of her employment with the department, Salcido and Tankersley were able to subject her to a hostile working environment at will because of the favoritism the department's officers were showing toward Salcido and Tankersley. This was, Holzer said, an outgrowth of the "rampant sexual harassment and sexual favoritism that existed within the PD."

Following Tankersley's firing in October 2019 and Salcido's resignation in November 2019, according to Holzer, she became the object of Reiss's sexual harassment, in which he began to pressure her to engage in a physical relationship with him, which she said she resisted.

On August 22, 2022, Salcido, who is also known as Julie Alvarado-Salcido, filed a labor/wrongful termination lawsuit against the City Of Redlands and its police department, alleging that Reiss had coerced her into performing oral sex on him in her office in August 2019.

At one point, according to Holzer, Reiss and Alexander had gone into the police department's basement "looking around" in an effort to locate Salcido's chair. The department's other forensic specialist, Ruth Samano, inquired if it was the chair they were seeking. This provoked Reiss to ask, "You know about the chair?" Holzer said that Samano told Reiss that she did, but that the chair was not there. Thereafter, Reiss and Alexander immediately left, according to Holzer.

Had it not been for Holzer's defiance of Reiss in preserving the chair and securing it in

an area of the department's evidence locker in the basement of the police department to which neither Reiss nor Crane nor Alexander had access, the matter would have died a quiet death.

According to Holzer, the matter lay dormant until in January of this year Sergeant Patrick Leivas "asked me about the chair evidence and if I had knowledge of it. I told him everything that happened. Holzer said it was her belief that Leivas thereafter touched off the investigations that led to Reiss's and Catren's departures from the department.

"Sgt. Leivas reported it to multiple law enforcement authorities and an investigation was started into what happened," Holzer said.

The chair is now in the custody of the FBI, the Sentinel is informed.

On January 30, Reiss, who was making \$201,316.59 in salary and \$477,464.74 in total annual compensation when his pay add-ons, perquisites and benefits were figured in, was placed on administrative leave. Upon learning that the evidence of his and Salcido's August 2019 tryst in her office was in the possession of the FBI, Reiss figured that his prospect of being reinstated with the department was virtually nonexistent and the chances that he would be able to find a position anything close to his deputy chief post in Redlands was slim, and he elected to retire. He is now pulling a \$188,736 per year pension.

Shortly after Reiss's suspension, Alexander was also placed on administrative leave.

Within the department there was spreading trepidation, as any of those who had been involved sexually with other members of the department or had even tangential involvement in the effort to bury the incident involving Reiss and Salcida or intimidate Holzer into remaining quiet about what she knew about it were potentially being focused upon in a rumored internal affairs investigation.

Given the extent of the issues being investigated and that those alleged to have been involved included Reiss, who was considered to be either the department's second- or third-highest ranking member, the city brought in an outside company to carry out the internal affairs investigation.

As that investigation was proceeding, there was further fallout, at least some of which landed on Police Chief Catren. According to Holzer, on February 8, Catren, whom she described as "nervous" and contrite, came into her office, engaging with her to tell her he "had no idea this was happening and that if he did know he would have stopped this long ago." Catren was referring to Reiss and Holzer's discovery of the chair in 2019 and the effort to have her destroy it.

According to Holzer, "I did not believe him because I know that he and Reiss are good friends and throughout his time on the department, Reiss was rewarded. I believe Chief Catren and others always covered up Reiss's bad behavior."

Three weeks later, Catren resigned.

"On 3/1/23 an emergency meeting was held with the announcement of Chief Catren medically retiring, although the chief appeared to be in good health," according to Holzer.

Three months since Catren's departure has now elapsed and the department is yet seeking to live down the specter of one of the department's deputy police chiefs, one of its commanders and a sergeant working in unison to destroy evidence.

One means of doing that, of course, would have been to look for someone outside the department to come in to head it up as police chief. City Manager Duggan and the city council, which counts among its five members two outspoken women, however, were convinced that the community would be better served by someone intimately familiar with the city who can be

relied upon to know the ins and outs of not just the department but the lay of the land in Redlands geographically, socially, institutionally and politically.

In terms of experience, seniority, time in place in crucial department capacities, educational achievement and other criteria, the three most logical in-house candidates for police chief were Martinez, Crane and Tolber, essentially in that order. Crane being involved in the incidents leading up to Catren's departure ruled him out as a candidate.

Ultimately, a consideration of the hole the department finds itself in proved to be the deciding factor. That the recent chapter that has put the department into disrepute consists of a narrative in which three men led the charge in seeking to destroy crucial evidence relating to multiple levels of wrongdoing and that it was two women – lower ranking and unsworn women – who were responsible for preserving the evidence of that wrongdoing did not mitigate, particularly, in Martinez's favor, despite the consideration that he was not directly involved in Reiss's, Crane's and Alexander's misdeeds and that he was instrumental in bringing the matter to the attention of the FBI.

Ultimately, Tolber, a graduate of the University of Redlands who has since earned a master's degree in criminology from the University of California at Irvine and a second master's degree in applied criminology from the University of Cambridge, was given the nod to succeed Catren.

"Rachel Tolber continues to exceed expectations as interim police chief," City Manager Charles Duggan said in announcing the appointment. "I have closely watched her work since being appointed interim chief, and I am impressed by her leadership qualities, dedication to the city, excellent decision making and her

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# San Bernardino County **Sentinel**

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## **Valdivia's Absolute Fundraising Advantage Proved Insufficient to Maintain His Political Ascendancy Once The Extent Of His Depredations In Office Became Known** *from page 4*

Valdivia had already begun to look forward to 2022 when he would need to stand for reelection, and he repeatedly emphasized the importance of his reestablishing political dominance over the city in the 2020 election through his control of the council so that he could deliver results for his campaign donors. During weekly mayoral staff meetings, Valdivia would routinely reprimand virtually all of his staff members, and was particularly harsh with Aboud and Smith for responding to constituent inquiries in Mulvihill's and Nickels' Seventh and Fifth wards, threatening them with the loss of their jobs if they continued to do so. Simultaneously, Valdivia demanded that his staff be intensely attentive to constituent inquires in Richards' and Figueroa's Sixth and Third wards.

During one mayoral staff meeting in January 2020, Valdivia told his staff members, who by law were prohibited from working on election campaigns while working in their taxpayer funded capacities, that they were in "reelection mode" and they needed to "get on board the train" by working on the Richards, Figueroa, Mlynarski and Torres campaigns and complete

a list of priority projects he was assigning them that would ensure his reelection two years hence. One such assignment was having Cousins, whose internship was supposed to be devoted to municipal policy analysis, intercede with the Chinese government to have Peking cover the cost of the San Bernardino Symphony traveling to China in a ploy intended to allow Valdivia to extract money from Chinese business leaders in support of his electoral efforts. When Cousins informed the mayor that the money to fly the symphony members and their instruments to various cities in China and provide them with hotel accommodations was not going to be forthcoming, Valdivia flew into a rage, bellowing "Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit! I want results, not excuses!"

When Valdivia was reminded that city employees could not work on political campaigns while they were on the clock and being paid by the public, Valdivia sought to have what he called "mandatory office closures" during which the employees would be furloughed, creating time for them to work on political campaigns. Valdivia indicated he was going to require all

of his staff who wanted to remain on the city payroll that they should use their vacation leave to attend campaign events.

A number of Valdivia's staff members were graduates of California State University San Bernardino. Despite the consideration that Cal State San Bernardino was obviously a major local institution in the jurisdiction in which he was the leading political light, during his mistreatment and domination of his employees Valdivia made scathing references to the college, characterizing it as a third-rate educational facility servicing intellectually challenged students.

While his staff at first sought to please Valdivia and most either went through the motions of or actually complied with completing the improper tasks they were assigned, virtually all, after a time, proved unwilling to carry them out. At the end of January 2020, both Cisneros and Cervantes resigned and retained attorney Tristan Pelayes, who subsequently assisted them in filing claims against Valdivia and the city. Subsequently, Aboud, who had been fired by Valdivia, and Smith also retained Pelayes. In response, Valdivia sought to have Cousins, Brizuela and Brown provide him with written statements refuting the allegations from Cisneros and Cervantes. To Valdivia's chagrin,

the three refused.

As the atmosphere in the mayor's office was deteriorating, Brown later related, an increasingly desperate Valdivia sought to preemptively destroy the credibility of his own staff members to head off the legal trouble his treatment of them had created.

Following Cisneros's and Cervantes' departure, the city had undertaken an investigation into the accusations they made against Valdivia, hiring Los Angeles-based attorney Carla Barboza to carry out that assignment. Valdivia sought to use his political reach to weaponize Barboza's investigation by seeking to have her conclude that the difficulties the city was experiencing was a product of the mayoral staff's collective insubordination.

Brown, Smith, Aboud, Cervantes and Cisneros, represented by Pelayes, filed suit against the city and Valdivia, alleging various forms of employment discrimination, employee mistreatment and/or wrongful termination. As the acts Valdivia was alleged to have engaged in were done while he was serving in his official capacity as mayor, the city council, in seeking to defend the city against the suits, elected to indemnify Valdivia as well, even as he complained that the city and the attorneys it had hired were not being aggressive enough in defending him. As the suits progressed, the dis-

covery process allowed both sides to arm themselves with information to pursue the suit or defend against it, including the provision of evidence in the form of documents and obtaining testimony relating to the substance of the allegations and the refutation of those allegations, involving the taking of sworn depositions of various city officials. Details with regard to how Valdivia comported himself as mayor began to emerge, extending to his bribetaking; his receiving money from entities with business before the city; his efforts to pressure city staff to accommodate those who had donated to his campaign or retained his consulting company, Advantage Comm; his attempted use of city facilities, resources and employees for political purposes; his pressuring of city employees to provide him with sexual gratification and his verbal abuse of the employees within his office. Simultaneously, Valdivia formed, in addition to his electioneering committee, a legal defense fund, to which he accepted donations and into which he transferred money that had originally been donated to his electioneering efforts. He then used some \$460,000 of those funds to retain and pay attorney Rod Pacheco to defend him in the face of the accusations contained in the lawsuits.

In June 2021, spurred by revelations from the

discovery processes for the various lawsuits and other developments, the city undertook another investigation into Valdivia's activities, the upshot of which was that it resolved to consider censuring him. In December 2021, during a public hearing in which the city and city council were represented by attorney Norma García Guillén, who presented the case against Valdivia, and Valdivia was represented by Pacheco, the council voted to censure him.

This created an unprecedented spectacle of the city simultaneously utilizing taxpayer funds to defend the mayor against charges, some of which the city council had declared him to be guilty of.

In 2022, six challengers to Valdivia emerged in that year's mayoral race, including Tran, who lives in San Bernardino; former City Attorney Jim Penman, a longtime Valdivia supporter who had been instrumental in Valdivia's initial success in getting into office as the representative of the Third Ward and who provided crucial support to him in his successful 2018 run for mayor and had more recently been gripped by a deep sense of contrition for having enabled Valdivia; Nickel, who was seeking to revive his political career after he narrowly lost his bid from reelection as Fifth Ward Councilman in 2020; and Trea-

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## Assemblyman Ramos's Version Of Warehouse Bill On Hold At Least Until Next Year *from page 3*

pertaining to land use, maintaining and setting up local jurisdictions, general plan processes pertaining to development, governance of special districts, local governance finance, special taxes, state mandates, the Subdivision Map Act and infrastructure financing districts, along with other issues. Its vice chair is Assemblywoman Diane Dixon, a Republican and the former Mayor of Newport Beach. The committee has one other Republican, Marie Waldron and five other Democrats – Lori Wilson, Robert Rivas, Blanca Pacheco, Ta-

sha Boerner and Ramos. Ultimately, the committee allowed AB 1748 to progress to consideration by the full Assembly and 86ed AB 1000.

It thus seemed that Ramos was set to prevail in the contest of competing warehouse regulation codification.

The California Legislature, however, has a June 2 deadline, for the first passage of a bill within the legislative house it originates in. If that deadline is met, then the bill will be passed to the other house – in this case the California State Senate – for passage there in its original form or adjustment in some manner before it is returned to the Assembly for second passage in identical form to what was passed in the State Senate. With a logjam of other bills being considered in the Assembly

this year, May ended and then the first two days of June have now elapsed with Assembly Bill 1748 having been voted upon. Thus, it has no prospect of becoming law this year, but will most likely be taken up for consideration in 2024.

There is a possibility that the delay will result in Assembly Bill 1000 making its way to the full Assembly and Assembly Bill 1748 being consigned to the dustbin.

Overlooked in April when Assembly Bill 1000 seemingly vanquished Assembly Bill 1748 were what a growing number of both Gómez Reyes's and Ramos's constituents say are some irregularities in Assembly Bill 1748 and Ramos's sponsorship of it.

The San Manuel Tribe owns warehouses and property slated for uses

as warehouses in the area around Highland and San Bernardino, including ones that are proximate to homes and businesses closer than the 1,000-foot distance specified in Assemblywoman Gómez Reyes' Assembly Bill 1000. One of those warehouses encompasses 1.1 million square feet.

Ramos has a pattern, some San Bernardino County residents have observed, of authoring, introducing or sponsoring legislation and otherwise taking action in his capacity as a state legislator which benefits himself, either directly or indirectly, as a member of the San Manuel Indian Tribe. With regard to other action by Ramos, they have lodged complaints with the with the Special Committee on Legislative Ethics and its chief counsel, Adam Sil-

ver. At present, the Sentinel is informed, another complaint is being readied, this one extending to Assembly Bill 1748. If, indeed, that complaint finds traction, Assembly Bill 1748 may need to be withdrawn. Without any other competing warehouse construction regulation legislation on the 2024 legislative calendar, Gómez Reyes's AB

1000 might advance in its place.

"I was disappointed that AB 1000 did not receive enough votes in April to pass out of the Assembly Local Government Committee," Gómez Reyes said, "but I am hopeful now that next year I will be able to work on it again next year as a two-year bill."

-Mark Gutglueck

## Let Boys Be Boys & Let Tolber Become Police Chief, Redlands Says *from page 4*

communication skills. Rachel possesses all of the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to succeed as our next police chief."

"I am truly humbled and honored to be selected to the lead the men and women of the RPD

in our service of such an incredible community," Tolber said. "I'm very fortunate to be part of this community and look forward to continuing to provide public safety and building meaningful relationships with all of our community partners, while providing the highest level of service to the residents of Redlands."

Tolber's appointment will become effective Monday, June 12.

-Mark Gutglueck

## State Grant To Fund Desert Seed Bank Expansion *from front page*

banks are a crucial tool for the conservation and management of ecosystems and the preservation of regional biodiversity, helping us safeguard our flora against species extinction and restore habitats and ecosystems with genetically-appropriate, source-identified seed," said Madena Asbell, director of plant conservation programs at the Mojave Desert Land Trust. "This project will expand the Mojave Desert Land Trust's seed bank program and allow us, along with our partners, to better address the region's seed needs and the growing threats caused by climate change and habitat loss."

The Mojave Desert Seed Bank is managed by the Mojave Desert Land Trust from its Joshua Tree headquarters. The new funding from the Wildlife Conservation Board will enable the seed bank to collect, process and store seed representing 300 taxa over the next four

years. This will expand the facility's current capacity to 500 taxa – approximately 20 percent of desert flora. Over the next four years, the seed bank aims to collect over 2,000 pounds of seed and make it available for restoration across the region.

The four-year expansion effort will include creating an inventory of California desert seed for use in restoration projects throughout the region, ensuring tribal engagement in seed collecting methods and protocols, conducting research and developing protocols that can be shared with the larger conservation community, and developing and implementing outreach and education materials to further the public's knowledge about the importance of California's native plants and the role of seed banking.

The Mojave Desert Seed Bank's purpose is to create a long-term, sustainable resource of native seeds that can be made available for research and restoration during times of increasing and uncertain threats to ecosystems, and to conserve rare, threatened, and endangered

plant species through partnerships with organizations like California Plant Rescue, known by its acronym, CaPR. As the effects of climate change lash out unpredictably across the desert region, the seed bank, with larger and more diverse stores of seeds, will be better equipped to fulfill conservation and restoration needs when and where such assistance is deemed most needed.

In January 2023, the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released "An Assessment of Native Seed Needs and the Capacity for their Supply: Final Report," which concluded that there is a severe shortage of source-identified, genetically-appropriate native seed available for restoration, and that the need for such seed is urgent. The report recommended supporting regional programs and partnerships with seed banks and nurseries, supporting responsible seed collection and long-term seed banking, supporting basic research, and collaborating with private and non-profit partners on expanding seed storage and seed-

cleaning infrastructure.

"This new project comes at an auspicious time and provides hopeful and significant new solutions to one of the pressing issues facing the California desert," said Kelly Herbinson, joint executive director of the Mojave Desert Land Trust. "This expansion of the Mojave Desert Seed Bank will help us in this work to protect biodiversity, improve climate change resiliency, and support the State Wildlife Action Plan priority habitats. We will help stabilize vulnerable native plant populations, make seed available for the restoration of natural landscapes that are carbon sinks, and provide an inventory of California desert seed for use in habitat restoration projects throughout the region. We are deeply grateful to the Wildlife Conservation Board for awarding this grant funding and look forward to carrying out this crucial work."

The long-term expansion of the Mojave Desert Seed Bank also includes construction of a 2,500 square-foot facility made possible by an anonymous donor. The new facility will

house a seed lab, climate-controlled storage, a processing room, and workspace for staff and volunteers.

The Seed Bank has made over 700 collections representing over 210 species since its establishment six years ago. The seed collection priorities include species with high restoration value, species that support state and federally threatened and endangered wildlife such as desert tortoise, and California Native Plant Society ranked taxa.

The collections, data, and knowledge gained are of value to scientists studying climate change in other regions. Desert plants have unique adaptations to allow them to survive harsh conditions, and genetic information on these adaptations is of particular interest to scientists as other regions of the world are becoming increasingly arid due to climate change, with factors such as drought, extreme temperatures, and salt in water and soil posing a significant threat to native fauna.

In 2020, Mojave Desert Land Trust's Seed Bank hit two major milestones: The seed bank joined California Plant

Rescue, a collaborative of not-for-profit botanical institutions working under the auspices of the Center for Plant Conservation to conserve the flora of California and the California Floristic Province. That same year, the Mojave Desert Land Trust entered a collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management to develop seed increase grow-outs for source-identified, native Mojave Desert seed to develop and document these protocols.

California's 30x30 Initiative is an effort under the aegis of the California Natural Resources Agency to take part in an international movement to conserve natural areas across the planet, to protect and restore biodiversity, expand access to nature, and mitigate and build resilience to climate change. In October 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued an executive order directing state agencies to catalogue, study and protect the state's diversity of wildlife species with the stated goal of protecting 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030.

-Mark Gutglueck













## Settle Suit Now, Says Former Councilman, Before The City Takes A Shellacking In Court And Defense Costs Further Skyrocket from page 5

sure Ortiz, a former city employee and longtime Valdivia critic.

The lion's share of the anti-Valdivia forces that had formed in the community coalesced behind Tran. In the June 2022 Primary Election, Valdivia, despite his overwhelming funding advantage, placed a distant third. Tran and Penman, having placed first and second, respectively, faced each other in a runoff held in the November General Election. Tran prevailed in that contest.

In the meantime, the lawsuits continued to be litigated. Valdivia, who after the June primary had become a lame duck and could no longer promise donors that he would be able to influence decisions in their favor at City Hall, saw the donations that had flowed freely into him in the form of political donations or contributions to his legal defense fund dry up. After the money in Valdivia's legal defense fund ran out, Pacheco, who over the course of the previous two years had been paid in the neighborhood of half of a million dollars

to defend the mayor and serve as his spokesman, abandoned his client. Valdivia remained as a defendant in the lawsuits, having made no real progress during the previous two-and-a-half years of warding off the charges leveled at him. Despite his discomfiture with the lack of aggressiveness the city's lawyers were exhibiting in fighting the lawsuits brought by Pelayes on behalf of Brown, Smith, Aboud, Cisneros and Cervantes, he had no choice, Valdivia recognized, to being represented by the lawyers the city had hired on his behalf.

In December, Valdivia left office and Tran became mayor. During closed sessions of the city council since that time, Tran and the council members have been given no fewer than seven updates on where that litigation stands. According to well-placed sources at City Hall, things are not looking good for the city. At this point, Pelayes is armed with a plethora of evidence and testimony to indicate that his clients were being put upon to engage in activity that was illegal, unethical, outside the city's own protocol or policy and that they were retaliated against when they resisted.

At the same time, the city has spurned at least three opportunities to settle the matters short

of going to trial.

Multiple factors are at play in the continuation of the lawsuits which the city's lawyers and at least three of the city council members acknowledge the city has no hope of prevailing on. One of those is out-and-out bureaucratic inertia, by which dislodging an institution as large as the city from the path it has been following requires an extraordinary show of resolve on the part of either one dynamic person within the bureaucracy or a critical mass of decision-makers, a shift which simply has not come about. Second is the financial incentive that the city's various legal representatives, including City Attorney Sonia Carvalho, Assistant City Attorney Thomas Rice and the law firm that employs them, Best Best & Krieger, have in keeping the litigation going, as continuing court appearances, the conducting of depositions, the filing of motions and other documents and work in general on the case generates billable hours for the law firm. Moreover, Tran's action or lack thereof when she was with the city in the capacity of human resources director is an issue in several of the lawsuits, which is something she would prefer not to become publicly exposed. In this way, continually suspending action on the

lawsuit is desirable to the council she is leading.

While those delays may be favorable to the mayor and at least some of the members of the city council, they are costing the city's residents money.

City officials were unable to quantify precisely how much money the city has spent on the lawsuits filed against it and Valdivia so far. There is no single line in the city's budget for legal and litigation costs, as the actual expenditures on the city's various lawsuits are spread throughout the city's individual department budgets and no bottom-line accounting of what the cost of litigation is exists as a single line item in the city budget. Based on what figures the *Sentinel* could obtain and estimates provided by knowledgeable individuals with access to City Hall, the city has spend well beyond half of a million dollars on legal services and other activity related to the lawsuits and when the legal fees and other costs tied to the lawsuits are tallied, including the time staff spends in dealing with litigation issues, the figure approaches or has exceeded one million dollars, one city source said.

Former Councilman Nickel said \$1 million is on the conservative side.

"I don't have a total and I don't think they have a total, but at just

the normal cost of litigation, when you consider this has been going on for more than three years now, it can't be anything less than a million dollars," he said.

He called upon the council to settle all of the cases pertaining to Valdivia at once.

"If the city had a winning case, then I would say, 'Fight on,' because we can't let people take advantage of us, and if we have to make examples of people who would come at the city with a frivolous case so others don't get the same idea and bleed us to death, then we should go all the way to trial if need be," Nickel said. "But this is not a winning case. I say that most emphatically. We had a womanizing mayor who put us into a really weak position. We need to recognize before we spend any more money on this that it is a losing case and settle it. The council needs to show enough courage to bite the bullet and admit we screwed up and move on."

The council has to recognize, Nickel said, that "BBK [Best Best & Krieger] is not on our side in this. Yes, they are our city attorneys, but in the end, they are a profit-making corporation. They have been engaged with us during this litigation for years, and they have accumulated billable hours with motions and just crazy ef-

forts that haven't worked to get us out of this. At some point, which should have been a long time ago, we have to come to terms with the fact that this is a losing case. We need to settle so we don't continue to burn through our city's reserves, what's left of them. We are just throwing good money after bad. Our former mayor did some things that were incredibly stupid. Our current mayor was involved in that when she was our human resources director, and she wants to avoid having to answer for that. Well, she's the mayor now and she should just suck it up and move us past this."

Tran needs to get over it and not worry about looking bad, Nickel said. She will survive if she acts forthrightly rather than being cowardly, he said.

"People are forgiving," he said. "She will make it even worse if she continues to drag out a case the city will not win. No matter how much money we spend, the city will lose. We should stop applying taxpayer money for Mayor Valdivia's defense. There's no principle involved here. This is someone trying to save face. Let's be honest and call a spade a spade."

The *Sentinel's* efforts to get Tran's response by press time were not successful.

## Mayor & Council Undecided On Changing Commission Appointment Protocol from page 11

applicants, which included Michelle Ballantyne, Charleen King, Richard Montijo, Jamie Aviles, Armida Garcia, Cecil Howell, David Matza, Stepheno Padilla, and Marquez, who reapplied.

With Takeuchi absent and Marquez not participating in the discussion, the commission considered a recommendation by a committee consisting of Martinez, Harwood and Montenegro-Olivas that Marquez be reappointed.

Based upon their evaluation of the applications and interviews of those would-be volunteers, Martinez, Harwood and Montenegro-Olivas recommended that Marquez be reappointed. On September 26, the commission voted 4-to-1, with Jerry, Martinez, Harwood and Montenegro-Olivas prevailing and Strong opposed to make a non-binding recommendation that Marquez be kept in place.

The council did so, and Marquez thus headed into the November election as a member of the commission, even with Strong indicating her concern that Marquez was exploiting his

position on the commission to boost his council electoral chances.

In the November 8 election, Burton captured the District 2 post with 2,955 of the 6,079 total votes cast, or 48.61 percent, to Orozco's 1,632 votes or 26.85 percent and Marquez's third-place showing, with 1,492 votes or 24.54 percent.

In September, Marquez was a little bit miffed, and he indicated his belief that the reappointment process should have less ambiguity.

In 1990, when the methodology for appointing the Community Services Commission

members was settled upon, the members of the city council were elected at large as was the mayor. At present, the mayor is still elected at large, but the four council members now represent a single district and are themselves residents of one district. Each district comprises one fourth of the city.

The way the appointments to the seven-member Public Services Commission are currently made involves six being designated by the mayor and the seventh being selected by the members of the commission, with confirmation by the city council.

Marquez said the se-

lection process should be changed so that each council member makes a selection of someone from his or her district, with the mayor getting two appointments of residents living anywhere in the city.

City Manager Linda Reich reacted by saying the city council could look into changing the process if it deemed doing so would be appropriate. Mayor Ulloa, who last year held off on making an automatic reappointment of Marquez when his term drew to a close and thus created the circumstance in which Strong's questioning of Marquez's use of his position on the com-

mission to gain electoral mileage led to the near suspension of his commission membership, did not appear to be too enthusiastic about changing the selection process.

It was left open as to whether the council will act on Marquez's suggestion.

The city council did up the stipend paid to the Community Services Commission members from \$50 per meeting to \$125 per meeting, putting them on par with the city's planning commissioners.

The council also voted to increase commissioners' terms from three years to four years.

—Mark Gutglueck