

With Three South Fontana Warehouses Package Vote As The Catalyst

Major Warren Political Machine Shift As Roberts & Garcia Break With Mayor

By Mark Gutglueck

In a startling development, the implication of which has yet to be fully determined, two of Fontana Mayor Acquanetta Warren's key council allies broke with her on the issue that has come to define her tenure in office more than any other when they voted in league with her longtime primary political rival this week to prevent the



John Roberts

approval of three warehouse projects at the south end of the city.

On Tuesday night July 5, Warren, voting in tandem with District 1 Councilman Phil Cothran Jr, failed to prevail in a 2-to-3 vote to alter the land use designation and zoning on 29.4 acres between Citrus and Oleander avenues, north of Santa Ana Avenue, and south of Jurupa Hills High School from residential to industrial.

Warren and Cothran



Pete Garcia

were turned back by the votes of opposition cast

by District 2 Councilman Jesse Sandoval, District 4 Councilman John Roberts and District 3 Councilman Pete Garcia, who banded together in a first ever alliance to prevent Newport Beach-based developer Acacia Real Estate Group from constructing three industrial commerce center buildings totaling 540,849 square feet on that land. See P 4

Former City Manager Back In A Temporary Role In Rialto



Henry Garcia

More than a decade after he left city officials in the lurch there, Henry Garcia has returned, at least for an interim, as Rialto's acting city manager.

Garcia has taken up the position six months after the abrupt departure of City Manager Marcus Fuller, who at no time during his 20-month stint as city manager established an even relationship with all five of the members of the city council, some of whom are known for their explosive temperament. By January, all sides acknowledged, managerial differences were too pronounced for him to remain, and he departed. Garcia relieves Assistant City Manager Arron Brown, who temporarily assumed the acting city manager from Fuller and has now returned to his original capacity as assistant city manager.

Garcia, who obtained a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of California, Riverside in 1979 and later obtained his master's degree in political science from UCLA, applied his education by going into government work, finding positions of progressively greater responsibility with the cities of Fontana, Riverside and San Jacinto.

In 1991, he was hired as city man- See P 2

Dual City Managers In Hesperia Were Costing City & Its Taxpayers \$83,870 Per Month

Shocked outrage has descended and begun to fester in certain quarters in Hesperia upon the discovery of the terms provided just departed City Manager Nils Bentsen during the last seven months of his tenure in Hesperia, coupled with the raise he was given in October of last year and the simultaneous redundancy of

a second city manager's salary being paid to his successor throughout that span.

It appears that since December 9, 2022 running through this week, the city has been paying Bentsen \$47,451.25 per month before benefits.

That arrangement was made, apparently, to secure what the city referred to as the "mentor-

ing" of the city manager who succeeded him, Rachel Molina.

Bentsen, who was the sheriff's station commander in Hesperia from July 2012 until January 2016, was selected by the Hesperia City Council in December 2015 to succeed outgoing City Manager Mike Podegrac beginning immediately upon his retire-

ment from the sheriff's department. Despite the consideration that Bentsen had spent his entire adult life as a law enforcement officer and had no formal or college training in municipal administration, the council as it was then composed felt management of the 73.209 square mile city which then had a population of 90,173 could be

entrusted to him.

The city initially entered into an employment agreement for Bentsen's services as city manager effective January 19, 2016. That original agreement was replaced or superseded in February 2018 and amended in June 2020. As of July 2022, Bentsen was earning \$258,825 in salary, another \$19,209

See P 3

Ghadimian's Proposal To Convert 400 Motor Inn In Needles Into A Veteran Apartment Complex Rejected

The Needles Planning Commission on July 7 put the kibosh on Armen Ghadimian's proposal to convert the long-dormant Imperial 400 Motor Inn on Broadway Street into an apartment complex.

Ghadimian, who represents for NAAR Capital, LLC, acquired the property, which has been vacant for over a decade

after a fire gutted five of its units, and the entire building was red-tagged. Ultimately, Ghadimian's intent was to refurbish all 32 units and augment each with a kitchenette and a single bedroom. Those units would entail approximately 240-to-280 square feet each, he said. Ideally, they would be living quarters for veterans, either living alone

or with a single partner, similar to another project Ghadimian has completed in Needles, the reclamation of the Sage hotel.

The 10,288-square-foot Imperial 400 Motor Inn is located at 644 West Broadway Street.

The major renovations to the motel would have been the construction of the kitchenettes, the replumbing See P 3

Obernalte & Cohorts Move To Block California's Gas Car Ban

Yesterday, House Resolution 1435, sponsored by Congressman Jay Obernalte and three other Republican lawmakers, was passed by the Energy and Commerce Committee.

H.R.1435, which is known as the Preserving Choice for Vehicle Purchases Act, was introduced by Pennsylva-

nia Congressman John Joyce, Ohio Congressman Bob Latta, Florida Congressman Gus Bili-rakis and Obernalte. It will will next be considered by the full U.S. House of Representatives.

H.R.1435, would amend federal law to block attempts to eliminate the sale of See P 3

Curbside Trash Bins In Mountain Communities An Open Indication To Burglars

Because of poor communication and a lack of coordinated customer service, some mountain community residents and landowners have been left vulnerable to grifters and burglars seeking to victimize them.

In accordance with state legislation, Senate Bill SB-1383, and a recently revamped franchise agreement between Big Bear Disposal, Inc.

and the City of Big Bear Lake, Big Bear Disposal has been, since mid-to-late June, providing its customers with new 96-gallon gray carts for trash and 96-gallon blue carts for recyclables.

Senate Bill 1383 was passed several years ago and requires requires all jurisdictions in California to provide organic waste – essentially food waste – collection ser-

vices to all residents and businesses. The implementation of SB 1383 has been delayed several times, and in multiple areas it is now being actuated. The gray trash carts supplied by Big Bear Disposal are intended to accept all non-recyclable solid waste including food waste.

In the mountain communities, particularly in Big Bear, many who own

land there have dwellings or cabins as second homes or vacation homes, such that they are absent from them for a good deal of time.

In many, though certainly not all, cases, those absentee owners are present more during the winter or even the spring or autumn months than they are during the summer. In some cases, they may not be present

for week or months on end.

As in the more urban environments down the hill, trash service in the mountain communities is weekly. Most mountain residents who are present set their trash out the night before or the very early morning of the day of collection and retrieve the empty bins shortly after the collection has oc- See P 3

In Fontana, Garcia Learned The Ease With Which Municipal Authority & The Trust Instilled In Civic Officials Can Be Exploited For Personal Gain *from front page*

ager in Azusa, where he remained for six years, at which point he jumped to Colton. Thereafter, in 2001, he opportunistically left for neighboring Rialto, remaining in that post for ten years. In 2011, he once again pulled up stakes to become the city manager of Moreno Valley, a post he remained in for three years, his stay being punctuated by another unexpected departure in 2014. That knelled his essential retirement, although he served, for a short period of time last year, as the interim city manager in Eastvale.

Recurrent in Garcia's municipal management career are precipitate departures in which the cities he served, which were generally involved with some order of adversity or scandal, were left in the lurch by his decision to move on.

Garcia's early municipal experience was in large measure shaped by his first mentor, Fontana's legendarily corrupt City Manager Jack Ratelle. Ratelle had a prodigious capacity for graft and an even more impressive ability to sidestep or bypass any accountability for action that in another context or circumstance would have sent its perpetrator to prison for decades. Inherent in Ratelle's formula was his ability compromise his political masters. In one case, Ratelle was aware, the mayor was a "silent partner" in development deals that were taking place in the city. The mayor knew he could count upon Ratelle to keep that knowledge to himself. In another case, Ratelle arranged for a city job for a councilman's inveterately unemployed son-in-law. When one city councilman's welding business was going through a rough patch, Ratelle arranged for certain businesses in the city, which needed assistance with permits and certain applications at City Hall, to call upon

the councilman's company when they needed welding and metalwork. Another councilman, a teacher at one of the city's junior high schools, got himself in trouble when he became sexually involved with some of the 12-year-old and 13-year-old girls in his classes. When Ratelle caught wind of that, he managed to pull the police department off the councilman, brokering a trade by which the councilman agreed to approve the city's pending contracts with the bargaining units for the police department's personnel, the chastened councilman was never charged and Ratelle owned him thereafter. Ratelle sewed up the votes of a city councilwoman by having a sexual relationship with her. Ratelle was equally or even more masterful at laundering bribes and kickbacks, both to himself and the other employees at City Hall who had to be "taken care of" for the intensive pay-to-play ethos that predominated in Fontana during his tenure, in which development interests were allowed to proceed with their projects or had the cost of the infrastructure required for those projects to proceed defrayed by the taxpayers in exchange for money. One such method was having the development interests cover the cost of his up-front real estate purchases. Another featured him setting up lines of credit at hotel-casinos in Las Vegas – in his case at the MGM Grand – and then having the developers/benefactors endow those lines of credit. Ratelle made a show of working the dice tables during frequent weekend getaways to Las Vegas, returning to Fontana the following money to regale city employees or others with tales of how much he had won, or occasionally lost, throwing bones. Under Ratelle, the practice of city officials, in particular city em-

ployees who might have a crucial say in land use decisions, having their spouses using maiden names or their children invest in real estate property that was located on the city's then-largely undeveloped north end and which had been included in a city redevelopment project area, was perfected. When Ratelle wanted as little public scrutiny on a matter that needed to be ratified by official action or a vote of the council, he would make sure that the item was not included on the city council's agenda. Then, on the day of the meeting, he would persuade the city clerk that there was an urgency for the matter to be placed on that evening's agenda as an "emergency walk-on item." By doing this at meetings where there was already a very full agenda, the issue would come up for discussion at a very late hour – well after 10 p.m. or 11 p.m. or even in the wee hours of the morning – when the item would be given a cursory introduction, a quick vote would be taken and virtually no one would know it had happened.

None of this was lost on Garcia.

By 1997, Garcia was out of favor with two members of the Azusa City Council and was engaged in a constant effort to maintain favor with the remaining three members, conscious that if one vote were to swing to the other side, he might be without a job. Simultaneously, 39 miles away, well across the Los Angeles/San Bernardino County divide, there had been turmoil over the fashion in which strongarm lobbying tactics and monetary inducements had been brought to bear to influence the awarding of the city's trash franchise after a decision to privatize the city's sanitation division had been made the previous year. The mayor that had spearheaded that effort, George Fulp, had been recalled in the November 1996 election partially as a result of the controversy. There was a subsequent inquiry into the man-

ner in which the competitor, Burrtec, which had come out on top in the analysis as to which trash-hauling company could best serve the city, was not given the refuse handling contract. Rather, a company that had finished behind Burrtec in the competition, Taormina Industries, had outmaneuvered all the other companies that had applied for the franchise in terms of lobbying and generosity to the city's elected officials, including Fulp, then-Councilman Don Sanders and Councilman Abe Beltran, who had been defeated in his bid for reelection in 1996, as well. At the behest of City Attorney Julie Biggs and Police Chief Bernie Lundsford, the city had retained former Riverside County Deputy Prosecutor Mark McDonald to look into the irregularities surrounding the awarding of the trash hauling franchise. The McDonald Report returned a finding suggesting that Fulp, Beltran and Sanders, in exchange for money provided to them by Taormina, had exerted pressure on City Manager Malik Freeman and Assistant City Manager Daryl Parrish to purposefully pervert the selection process in favor of Taormina. Freeman, actively, and Parrish, passively, the report held, acceded to that pressure.

The first casualty of the McDonald Report was Freeman, who was terminated by the council in an effort to stem the public outrage based upon the report's narrative describing him as taking a direct role in carrying out Fulp's, Beltran's and Sanders' bidding in vectoring the contract to Taormina. Parrish, whose transgressions in the matter were acts of omission rather than commission, was suspended but not terminated.

Since replacing Freeman with Parrish, at that point, was out of the question, the city carried out a recruitment effort to find a replacement city manager while the city contracted with Lenn Wood to act as Colton's

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SBCSentinel@yahoo.com

Legal Notice Department 951 567 1936

Message Line 951-567 1936

interim city manager.

Ultimately the city considered 49 applicants for the post, including Garcia, who endeavored to prevent anyone in Azusa from learning that he was under consideration for the Colton post. As the field narrowed and Garcia remained in the running, what could have been disaster for Garcia struck, as it was learned in Azusa that he was contemplating jumping ship. At that point, the three-member council majority in his favor in the city that then employed him was compromised and it was widely talked about in Azusa that Garcia's days there were numbered, as a consensus to replace him was building, the only delay being settling upon his replacement.

Nevertheless, Garcia evinced the guts of a cat burglar, putting on a brave face in his interaction with Colton officials, maintaining that he was secure in his position in Azusa, knowing that rules of governmental secrecy and employee confidentiality would keep the officials in Colton from learning he was, essentially, a dead man walking in Azusa.

A strong selling point Garcia had in Colton was that he lived in neighboring Grand Terrace with his then-wife, LeeAnn. Engaging in hard-nosed bargaining at the end of his discussions with Colton officials before he accepted the job, Garcia ensured that he was given a raise over what he was making in Azusa.

At that time, Colton was a bit of an anomaly among San Bernardino

County cities. Despite the consideration that at roughly 47,000 inhabitants it was then the 13th largest or 12th smallest of the county's 24 cities, it had seven city council members, consisting of a mayor and six council district representatives. Only the City of San Bernardino, which had, and still has, a mayor and seven council members, had a larger city council. Needles, like Colton, had a seven-member council. All 21 other city councils consisted of five members.

A primary element of Garcia's formula as city manager – one that has sustained him but which has also resulted in tremendous complication for both him and the cities where he has served – is his view of himself as an enabler of the city council, or to put it more precisely, an enabler of the council majority or a ruling coalition on the council, to the extent, of course, that there is a council majority or a ruling coalition that can be enabled.

Garcia had no sooner arrived in Colton than he learned that there was no semblance of a majority on the Colton City Council and the number of members it entailed created a multiplicity of factions – three, four or even five, depending on who was doing the counting – that made building a lasting consensus difficult and made things hazardous for the city manager who was in a position of securing not just three reliable votes to guarantee him-

Continued on Page 5

For Seven-And-A-Half Months Hesperia Was Paying For The Redundancy Of Two City Managers *from front page*

in pay add-ons and perquisites and benefits of \$86,730.36 for a total annual compensation of \$364,764.36.

Having reached the conclusion by late summer/early fall of last year that he should retire, Bentsen made a recommendation to the city council that it consider appointing Rachel Molina, who began with the city in 2007 as a senior office assistant in the city manager's office, served as the city's public information officer, deputy city manager and assistant city manager.

He asked Pam Lee, who had just assumed the position of city attorney from Eric Dunn, who had moved out of state, to frame his request to make his transition into retirement.

In a memo dated October 4, 2022 Lee asked the city council to consider a second amendment to Bentsen's current employment agreement as city manager, one which would have four effects, essentially. One of those would be to spike his eventual pension. The next would be to create a bonus arrangement that would in effect double his salary while he was overseeing Molina in her transition into the city manager's role. The third would keep him in place at City Hall while Molina was getting that final round of training.

Needles Commission Rejects Ghadimian's Motel Conversion Plan *from front page*

for all of the bathrooms and the major reconstruction of the units destroyed by fire. In addition, the apartment complex was to have two laundry rooms, an office and reception area.

Ghadimian, who has purchased a number of properties in Needles had a difficult time selling the project to the planning commission for more than one reason.

The fourth would effectively lock Molina in as the new city manager.

The memo reads, "It is recommended the city council consider the second amendment to the current city manager employment agreement, and a successor city manager employment agreement. Mr. Bentsen is eligible for retirement and has informed the city council he intends to retire at some date after December 9, 2022. The city has had only two city managers over the last 17 years. The city manager is recommending that Assistant City Manager Rachel Molina be appointed as his successor upon his impending retirement. The city council desires to maintain stability in the city manager's office and ensure a smooth transition, and to that end has proposed an amendment to the agreement as an incentive for Mr. Bentsen to remain as city manager and use his six-plus years of experience to provide mentorship, transition projects, advise on the broad range of city manager responsibilities, and use his institutional knowledge to ensure a successful transition. The proposed amendment includes a bonus for each month Mr. Bentsen remains as city manager after December 9, as well as a 10% increase in salary. The proposed agreement with Ms. Molina provides that she will automatically assume the position of city manager upon Mr. Bentsen's retirement. The proposed

The property lies within the city's commercial district, and some of the commission members were concerned that the residents the project will attract will ward off customers there. Ghadimian acknowledged upfront that what he was proposing was "Section 8 housing" that was veteran specific, which would be occupied by those obtaining "housing vouchers."

And while city staff are enthusiastic about creating housing oppor-

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amendment includes a monthly bonus and a salary increase."

The second amendment to Bentsen's 2018 contract states, "This second amendment to City of Hesperia City Manager Employment Agreement is made and entered into October 4, 2022, by and between the City of Hesperia, a general law city and municipal corporation and Nils Bentsen, an individual. Whereas, effective January 19, 2016, the city council of the city entered into the City of Hesperia City Manager Employment Agreement with employee; and whereas on February 20, 2018, the city council entered into a second City of Hesperia City Manager Employment Agreement with employee, which is currently in effect; and whereas Section 9.2 of the agreement provides that it "may be amended at any time by the mutual consent of the parties by an instrument in writing, which amendment shall require city council approval"; and whereas on June 2, 2020, the city council and employee entered into the first amendment to the agreement to temporarily reduce employee's salary as part of the city's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and require that at least four (4) votes of the city council would be required to terminate employee without cause; and whereas the city council and employee now desire to enter into this second amendment to provide that: i) effective the first full pay period following the approval of this second amendment, employee will receive a ten percent (10%) base salary increase and ii) in order to encourage employee's continued retention and ensure a smooth transition between city managers, beginning December 9, 2022 employee will receive a non-Public Employees Retirement System [applicable] retention bonus for each full month worked thereafter in an amount equivalent to his then-current monthly base salary; and whereas

employee desires to accept these employment terms from the city and agrees to the following terms and conditions in this second amendment, now, therefore, in consideration of the mutual covenants contained herein, city and employee hereby agree as follows: 1. The above recitals are incorporated by reference as if set forth in full herein. Section 2.1 of the Agreement, entitled 'Base Salary,' shall be amended to read, in its entirety, as follows: 2.1 Base Salary. As of July 2, 2022, Employee's annual base salary is Two Hundred Fifty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Five Dollars (\$258,825). Effective the first full pay period following the approval of this second amendment, employee shall be provided a ten percent (10%) increase to his salary.' A new Section 2.5 shall be added to the agreement, entitled "Retention Bonus," to read, in its entirety, as follows: "2.5 Retention Bonus. In order to encourage employee's continued retention under the terms of the agreement and ensure a smooth transition between city managers, beginning December 9, 2022, in addition to the salary employee shall be paid a monthly bonus for each full month worked after December 9, 2022, in an amount equivalent to his then-current monthly base salary. Such monthly retention bonus payments shall not be considered "compensation earnable" under California Public Employees Retirement System laws and regulations for purposes of calculating his California Public Employees Retirement System service retirement benefits."

The agreement was signed by Mayor Brigit Bennington and ratified at the city council's October 4 meeting by a unanimous vote.

Simultaneously, on October 4, the city council agreed to a "City Manager Employment Agreement entered into by and between the City of Hesperia and Rachel Molina" likewise drafted by City Attorney Pam

Lee and dated October 4, which conferred upon her an "annual base salary of Two Hundred Forty Thousand Dollars (\$240,000.00), effective the effective date of this agreement."

Thus, between October 4 and December 9, 2022, Hesperia had, officially by contract, two city managers. One of those, Bentsen, was being paid at a rate of \$284,707.50 in annual salary along with roughly \$19,209 in pay add-ons and perquisites plus another \$86,730.36 in benefits for a total annual compensation of \$390,646.86, or \$32,553.90. per month. The other, Molina, was paid at a rate of \$240,000.00 in annual salary plus \$23,789 in pay add-ons or perquisites along with

Oberholte Bill To Extend Internal Combustion Vehicles Use Beyond 2035 Advances *from front page*

vehicles with internal combustion engines. Further, the legislation would restrict the Environmental Protection Agency from issuing any waivers that would ban the sale or use of new motor vehicles with internal combustion engines. The Preserving Choice in Vehicle Purchases Act was introduced in response to the California Air Resource Board's decision to effectively ban the sale of new, internal combustion engine vehicles by 2035, in an effort to force

Curbside Trash Bins Are A Give-away That No One Is Home *from front page*

curred, usually in the afternoon or early evening of the same day.

With Big Bear Disposal's delivery of the new bins, those properties where there are absentee owners have now become easy to discern because at the front of the driveways leading to those residences are two long neglected new trash bins.

\$67,306.86 in benefits for a total annual compensation of \$331,095.86, or \$27,591.32 per month. From December 10 until this week, the duration during which Bentsen remained in place to "mentor" Molina and assist with the transition between city managers, Bentsen was receiving a combined monthly salary and bonus of \$47,451.25 along with monthly perquisites and pay add-ons of \$1,600.75 and monthly benefits of \$7,227.53 for a total monthly compensation of \$56,279.53, meaning his rate of total annual compensation stood at \$675,354.36, which made him during the first six months of 2023, one of the most highly, if not the most highly, remunerated city managers in California.

automakers to cease the development and production of new gas-powered motor vehicles. "If California bans all gas-powered vehicles, as the California Air Resources Board is attempting to do, our cost of living will increase, blackouts and brownouts will become more frequent, and commuting families in my district will suffer," said Congressman Oberholte. "Our bill will restrict the EPA from issuing the waiver California needs to execute its proposed ban, and by doing so will ensure all American consumers have choices in their transportation options."

Burglars can now conveniently drive through the mountain community neighborhoods and note with ease where there are homes that are vulnerable to burglary because there is no one home to watch over the property or the valuables that are contained within them.

In some Big Bear Lake neighborhoods, as many as four out of five homes are empty during most summer weekdays.

Moreover, the proliferation of trash bins along the street are for many people an eyesore.

In Fontana, Garcia Learned The Ease With Which Municipal Authority & The Trust Instilled In Civic Officials Can Be Exploited For Personal Gain *from front page*

Essentially, the industrial commerce center buildings were to have been warehouses/distribution centers.

Fontana has been so aggressive in building warehouses over the last dozen years that Warren is known by those who both oppose and favor warehouse development as “Warehouse Warren.” Fontana’s favoring of that land use has occurred in the larger context of a general accommodation of that particular land use within the Inland Empire and San Bernardino County, which is located along the 10, 210 and 215 freeways and the Union Pacific/Santa Fe/Burlington Northern railroad line and its general position within Southern California, which involves large port facilities in San Pedro and Long Beach that land massive amounts of merchandise from manufacturers in Asia brought across the Pacific Ocean by ship.

There is more than 930 million square feet of warehousing in San Bernardino and Riverside counties at present, with more being built. That includes 3,034 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. In addition to those 47 larger warehouses, Rialto has another 125 warehouses of under 100,000 square feet.

Since Warren was elevated to the position of mayor in 2010, Fontana has embraced warehouse development. Citing Fontana’s location, she says her city is a logical host for warehouses and distribution centers. She has argued that given the largely blue collar populace of Fontana and the consideration that approaching 30 percent of the parents of children attending Fontana schools either do not speak, or lack proficiency in, the English language, the best that can be done for a significant percentage of those who graduate from or drop out of Fontana’s high schools is to provide them with jobs such as those available in warehouses, which do not demand skilled laborers. Between 2016 and 2021, Fontana approved more than 30 warehouses totaling approximately 16 million square feet in southern Fontana alone.

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 Fontana in particular, an increasingly vocal element of the community has decried the relatively poor pay and benefits provided to those who work in the logistics facilities, and the degree to which warehouse operators not only exploit those who work there but victimize nearby residents with their use of 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 the face of that, Warren maintained that the building of warehouses constitutes easy “economic advancement” for the Fontana community, which allows those with capital to acquire or tie up property and quickly convert the land into warehouses consisting of tilt-up buildings, thereby generating fast money and investment in the local economy.

In 2021, with the city council composed exactly as it is now, the city council voted 4-1, with Sandoval being the lone dissenting vote, in favor of placing a 206,000-square-foot warehouse on the north side of Jurupa Hills High School at the corner of Slover and Oleander avenues. After word reached California Attorney General Rob Bonta about that action, he sued Fontana over its affinity for warehouses.

As part of an effort to appease those objecting to the proliferation of warehousing in the city, Warren and her council allies adopted the so-called Industrial Commerce Center Sustainability Standards Ordinance, which city officials said offered an assurance logistics facilities to be built in the city in the future would meet or exceed “all federal and state environmental standards for warehouses and freight operations.” The city settled the suit brought by Bonta with an agreement that it would apply

greater regulation of the construction of logistics facilities in the city of 214,307.

Environmentalists and community activists, however, saw what Warren and her cohorts were doing as merely engaging in lip service and a cynical manipulation of their governmental authority to continue to cater to the real estate industry, land speculators and developers that were heavily investing in Warren’s political career and her political machine. They decried the fashion in which she and the ruling council coalition she controlled nonchalantly imposed more warehouses on the neighborhoods at the city’s south end.

In constructing the justification for allowing Acacia Real Estate Group to construct the three warehouses, city staff emphasized that Acacia would comply with the Industrial Commerce Center Sustainability Standards Ordinance. One of the ordinance’s provisions was that a warehouse’s loading docks for trucks, the entryways for the trucks and the lanes for the trucks be sited such that the vectoring of exhaust is away from adjoining properties to the extent possible and that all untoward environmental impacts from vehicles at the site be minimized. The design of the three warehouses met that specification as best as the location and orientation of the property would allow, although, in one case, the docks at one warehouse faced the high schools athletic field. City officials, however, cited a provision of the Industrial Commerce Center Sustainability Standards Ordinance which gave the city’s planning director the discretion to sign off on the site design if such an issue were unavoidable and elements were layered into the design to minimize that impact.

In the city’s acceptance of the environmental impact report for the project, city staff conceded that the three

warehouses, entailing a total of 69 loading docks, would generate unavoidable environmental impacts including greenhouse gas emissions, noise and traffic impacts. Nevertheless, the city council, as the city’s ultimate land use and environmental authority, had the discretion of citing overriding considerations such as economic factors in allowing the project to proceed.

For the three projects to be given go-ahead, the property, which is currently zoned to allow up to 507 residential units, would have had its land use designation changed to general industrial.

Mayor Warren and Councilman Cothran were clearly in favor of the project.

Senior Planner Salvador Quintanilla provided a preview of the project. In addition to being south of Jurupa Hills High School, the project areas is also immediately adjacent to the Fontana Adult School and Citrus Continuation High School to the east.

After the staff presentation, public input, limited to one minute each, was heard.

Santa Ana property owner Josh Hayes McKernan said he supported the project.

Michael Townsend, speaking on behalf of Assemblywoman Eloise Gomez-Reyes, opposed the project; Maha Rizvi opposed the project. Jose Badillo, a construction union member, said he supported the project. Bill Quisenberry, a construction union member, said he supported the project. John Carlo, a property owner, said he supported the project. Amanda Morales, the special projects coordinator for the Fontana Chamber of Commerce, said she and the chamber supported the project. Beatriz Mora, a local insurance agent, said she supports the project. Nathaniel Noriega, who said he was a “resident advocate for the City of Fontana,” said it was his “external opinion, independent of any organization” that the project would generate 1,000

new jobs. He said opposite to the project was engaging in “trivial cat-and mouse games” who were obstructing growth “with no valid reasoning.” Danielle Holley, with the Fontana Chamber of Commerce, supported the project. Matt Slowik, a former Fontana planning commissioner and city councilman, current San Bernardino County Planning Commissioner and real estate salesman, said he supported the project. Luis Echeverria, a local contractor, said he supported the project. Daniel Reid, a member of the Fontana Chamber of Commerce, said he supported the project. Jim Tusko, a landowner on Santa Ana Avenue, said he supported the project. Oscar Gonzalez, a south Fontana resident, said he opposed the project. Joaquin Castellejos said, “Thank you for bringing these amazing warehouses to Fontana, these beautiful cement blocks that create more heat. Thank you for bringing these amazing jobs that pay \$16 an hour for back-breaking work that don’t give families time to spend together to go to whatever this family time we are talking about. Thank you for building them next to the schools where kids are going to school, where parents are dropping off their kids. Thank you for putting the driveways where parents are going up and down the streets. Thank you so much. You guys are the best ever. Thank you for never thinking about the people and always thinking about developers. Thank you for bringing these jobs that are going to be automated in the next ten years.”

Elizabeth Sena said rezoning residential land to industrial use was incompatible with the city’s acknowledgment of being in a housing crisis.

Jennifer Cardenas said the 170 million square feet of warehousing planned or under construction in the Inland Empire was sufficient and that it was

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In Colton, Garcia Demonstrated His Affinity For Finding A Municipal Management Gig Where The Elected Officials Were Steeped In Graft *from front page*

self job security but four. The city's mayor – Karl Gaytan, who achieved notoriety by coaching the Colton High football team and came into office as the top vote-getter when Fulp had been recalled – was constantly seeking a coalition, relying upon Councilman Sanders and Councilman James Grimsby and Councilwoman Betty Cook to vote with him on issues of what he considered importance. That coalition sometimes coalesced for him, but as often did not. At that time, Councilmembers Deirdre Bennett and Kelly Chastain had formed a firm friendship and seemingly unbreakable political bond, mimicking each other's votes right down the line. Neither Bennett nor Chastain got along terribly well with Gaytan. Councilman John Hutton, who was also the city's director of public works, was a wild card, moving into and out of alliance with Cook on issues and occasionally networking with Sanders and Grimsby to take the lead on a few specific issues on which he would usually prevail.

In November 1998, things did not get any less complicated for Garcia when Hutton unsuccessfully challenged Gaytan for the mayoralty and in losing gave up his position on the council representing the Second District. Hutton was replaced by Richard DeLaRosa, whose presence on the council made the existing alliances on the council no less opaque.

Garcia's efforts to remain on the good side of at least four of the council members was complicated by the consideration that the enmity between Gaytan and Bennett meant that he could do virtually nothing to please either Bennett or Chastain, lest he offend Gaytan. Generally, he could cater to Sanders and Cook without getting crosswise of the mayor, but on those

occasions where Gaytan found himself in a dispute with either of them on an issue or agenda item, Garcia would be absolutely bewildered. He endeavored to cultivate DeLaRosa as a supporter.

At times, Garcia's effort to line up as many votes as he could took on comic or even a pathetic dimension, as when he found himself literally serving in the role of Grimsby's chauffeur.

In 1999, the FBI, which was looking into major scale violations of the public trust by individuals in the county governmental structure in San Bernardino County began to quietly look into ways in which corruption among county officials had seeped into the county's municipal establishment, as well. By 2000, a portion of the FBI's focus had fallen on Colton. Agents initially kept the issues and targets in that investigation very close to the vest, instructing those interviewed to not disclose that those interviews had taken place or what the subject of inquiry was. With the investigation under way in earnest by late 2000 and early 2001, a gradually widening circle in Colton became aware that something was up, including Garcia, who learned that federal agents had begun close scrutiny of several sets of documents and records at City Hall. With word spreading among city insiders that Councilman Sanders was "wearing a wire," that is, a hidden recording device on his person, and that he was, sometimes with subtlety and sometimes clumsily, seeking to inveigle his municipal colleagues into implicative conversations, Garcia took a hard look at his options.

In neighboring Rialto, the city council there was making do with the services of Walt King as the acting city manager while a search was on to find someone to replace

Joseph Guzetta, who had left Rialto to become the city manager in Desert Hot Springs.

Quietly, Garcia contacted Rialto officials, offering them his services, explaining how he could make a seamless transition from the 47,662-population 15-square mile Colton to 91,873-population 22.4-square mile Rialto virtually overnight.

Rialto took him up on the offer. Less than two months later, Gaytan, Sanders and Grimsby, along with former councilman Beltran and San Bernardino County Supervisor Jerry Eaves, billboard mogul William "Shep" McCook, real estate broker Allan Steward and Suncrest Homes general manager Michael Berg were indicted by a federal grand jury, based upon accusations that Eaves, Gaytan, Beltran, Sanders and Grimsby had taken bribes from McCook, Steward and Berg in exchange for supporting McCook's construction and eventual sale of billboards on county flood-control property at the junction of the 10 and 215 freeways in Colton.

Gaytan, Sanders and Grimsby were convicted and removed from office.

Garcia remained in place in Rialto for ten years. During that decade, the city operated day-to-day, week-to-week, month-to-month and year-to-year, functioning, more or less, as a cohesive municipal unit, maintaining relative political stability under then Mayor Grace Vargas, who held that position when Garcia was hired in 2001 and was reelected in 2004 and 2008.

Among the four traditional principles of management – planning, organizing, directing and controlling – Garcia's known weakness was with the first. When he came into the post of manager, Rialto at that point was approaching 90 years old, having been incorporated on November 17, 1911. An obvious issue was the city's decaying infrastructure. Garcia, while accom-

plished in the bureaucratic methodologies of directing and controlling and adequate in the arena of organizing, was, if not incapable of carrying out adequate long-range planning, extremely reluctant to do so.

When he came to Rialto, the city was plagued with a barely adequate water system that was capable of servicing only about half of the city's population and which was dilapidating in much of its aspect and literally crumbling in most of the rest. The city's public works division was playing constant catch-up, repiping the most critically deficient sections of the system, but often merely linking one problematic span to another, with no overarching strategy of revamping the entire system in any sort of methodical way. That haphazard – and ultimately more costly – approach predominated throughout most of the decade that Garcia was in Rialto.

Roughly half of Rialto's residents received, as they yet do, their water from the municipal water system. The other half are customers of West Valley Water District, which serves customers in Rialto as well as in portions of Fontana and Colton, all of Bloomington and a sliver of northern Riverside County. While it was recognized that the city needed to make a financial commitment to reconstruct the municipal water system comprehensively, the city council as it was then composed, advised and led by Garcia, did not have the stomach to bite the bullet and impose the rate increases or other revenue generating formulas that would allow that upgrading to take place. As city officials temporized, the water system degraded further.

At last, some eight years into his tenure as city manager, Garcia undertook to seriously look at what could be done with Rialto's aging and decaying municipal water system. Ultimately, he came up with what he hoped might work. He

courted the corporation American Water Works and its New Jersey-based affiliate, American Water Operations and Maintenance, Inc., and when corporate officers there showed some interest, they began negotiations with them. They formulated an approach by which a division of American Water Works was to be formed, known as Rialto Water Services, which was to function as a local company and take over operation and maintenance of the water district. The city was to retain the district's water rights, but the company was to further take on all aspects of water operations, maintenance and billing along with the city's wastewater/sewer operations, effectively running both the water and sewer utilities for three decades. The city's water and wastewater division employees were to be allowed to transfer into the city's engineering or public works divisions if they wished, remaining as city employees with their public pension plans intact or were to be allowed to go to work with American Water Works, which would have been required to guarantee those employees would remain employed for at least 18 months with salary and benefits equal to those offered by the city. That guarantee was to sunset after a year-and-a-half.

Garcia obtained a verbal commitment from American Water Works that it would make \$45 million in upgrades to the water system and assume all debt owed by the city's water utility division and fund all needed infrastructure improvements to the system. In return, city officials had lined up the city council's agreement to allow American Water to significantly increase the water service and sewer service rates to be charged to customers. As those rate increases would come as a consequence of American Water's takeover of the water system operations, the calculation was that the elected city

officials to whom Garcia was answerable, would be spared the antipathy of Rialto residents at the dramatic increases in water rates they were to experience.

As city officials and American Water corporate officers sought and ever closer inched toward closing the deal, issues that yet needed to be resolved cropped up, keeping the contract and operational hand-off from being actuated.

Then, in January 2011, Garcia departed as Rialto city manager. Caught completely unprepared for Garcia's departure, the city council turned first to Redevelopment Director Robb Steel to oversee the city but after a week conferred the acting city manager role on Police Chief Mark Kling, who remained in that capacity for six months. Kling, who knew nothing about the deal that was in the works with American Water and made no pretense of understanding the intricacies and the ins and outs of the terms and what their implications were either in the short or long term, shied away involving himself in making any commitments that would lock the city into a three-decade long arrangement he could not fully comprehend. During Kling's run as city manager, no progress toward transferring the management of the city's water system to American Water Works was made.

Garcia's departure at that crucial juncture would have a legacy which is not commonly considered positive.

When Mike Story eventually came in as city manager in late summer 2012, he sought to aggressively address the city's infrastructure and service needs, working, somewhat belatedly, along the lines had Garcia explored, recognizing the city did not have the financial wherewithal to undertake the water system upgrades on its own. He recommitted to making the deal with American Water. In March 2012, the city

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San Bernardino County **Sentinel**

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Diversion Of Roberts & Garcia From Warren On Warehouse Approval Represents An Historical Political Shift With Yet Untold Implication For Future Fontana Governance *from page 5*

“ridiculous that you are normalizing building these warehouses next to schools.”

Bobbi Jo Chavarria said “There are many factors that make a warehouse/industrial/what you euphemistically call a commerce center next to Jurupa Hills High School unacceptable.

Damian Mejia said the truck traffic on Santa Ana was unsafe.

Rafael Rios said the near minimal wage jobs at the warehouses would not allow those working there to afford to live in one of the city’s “fancy condos.”

An adjustment to the proposal called for additional space and landscaping between the northern boundary of the property to be converted to industrial use and the southside of Jurupa Hills High.

After having agreed previously to provide a public benefit fee of \$2.3 million to the city if the project were approved, Acacia Real Estate Group consented to up that to \$3.3 million.

Cothran, citing trucks utilizing routes into the warehouses that would have them driving past the schools and bring them in proximity to the schools’ athletic fields, called for converting

Santa Ana Avenue into a truck route to keep trucks away from the school. Warren endorsed that idea, and there appeared to be consensus to schedule some future action to amend the general plan to make that action official.

When the vote was taken on the project, however, both Roberts and Garcia defected from the Warren coalition, the first time in memory such a vote occurred with regard to any significant development project.

Roberts, the second-longest currently serving municipal official in San Bernardino County, has been on the Fontana City Council continuously since 1992, ten years longer than Warren. Nevertheless, he has become highly dependent upon her and her political machine for his electioneering fundraising over the last decade, as he has become a firm a fast member of her ruling council coalition.

Garcia’s political career exists solely as a consequence of Warren’s cultivation of him as a candidate. He was elected to school board with her assistance and made the transition to the city council in 2020 with her backing. Warren, Co-

thran, Roberts and Garcia are all Republicans and have established themselves in office and sustained themselves there as a consequence of the vastly superior Republican electioneering machinery that exists in San Bernardino County vis-a-vis the Democrats. Despite the consideration that in the central section of San Bernardino County the Democrats hold a commanding registration advantage, superior Republican fundraising, campaign coordination and sophistication and cohesion have allowed the GOP to field more office holders than their Democratic counterparts. In Fontana, at present, 55,107, or 49.5 percent, of the city’s 111,398 voters are registered as Democrats, while Republicans number 23,208 or 20.8 percent, which is fewer than the 24,922 or 22.4 percent who express no party affiliation. The remaining 7.3 percent are members of the American Independent, Green, Libertarian, Peace & Freedom or other more obscure parties. Despite the substantial numerical disadvantage the Republicans in Fontana find themselves in, Warren is able to bring the strength of her political machine to bear to not only keep herself in office but to virtually handpick three of the other four members of the city council. Thus, she is hands down the city’s most powerful

political figure.

Councilman Sandoval is the council’s only current Democrat. He ran against Warren for mayor unsuccessfully in 2018 and 2022. Until this week, his has been the lone vote against Warren and the rest of the council in resisting the proliferation of warehouses in the city.

With Garcia and Roberts lining up with Sandoval against Warren on the three warehouse proposal this week, a question has emerged about how Warren will deal with the dissension within her ranks.

Last year, in the November 2022 election, both Warren and Roberts were reelected to four-year terms. Garcia is scheduled to face reelection next year. Given her fundraising ability and political reach, Warren could, if she so chooses, withdraw her support from Garcia and back another candidate. Allowing Garcia to defy her on the warehouse issue as he did this week could prove problematic for Warren, who has built her reputation on being able to assure her backers and donors – who come largely from the field of developers working within Fontana – that she can deliver when it comes time to approve their development proposals. Allowing the streak of three failed warehouse projects to stand, with the prospect that Garcia and

Roberts might in the future cross over again to support Sandoval in preventing her from keeping faith with the developers and land speculators who have supporter her all along because of her ability to control land use policy in the city, could compromise her politically.

There is speculation that the independence Roberts and Garcia showed from Warren in this instance was an anomaly.

Another elected official this week told the *Sentinel* that what tripped up Acacia Real Estate Group in this instance was a personality conflict that originated with the company’s managing partner, David Pittman. Pittman’s aggressive approach, the *Sentinel* was told, took Roberts and Garcia aback, rubbing them the wrong way, ultimately leading to their decision not to support the project. A replay of what occurred this week is unlikely to recur if another company is involved, particularly if any future proposals entail a single warehouse rather than three.

Still, there is conflicting information out there.

Circulating is that Garcia, by signing onto the Warren political machine with its unquestioning embrasure of warehouses and distribution centers might have compromised himself professionally. An em-

ployee with the California Department of Toxic Substance Control, Garcia’s seeming willingness to sign off on approving warehouse after warehouse, particularly ones which are located proximate to extremely sensitive uses such as high schools, particularly when there are unknown factors at play such as what chemicals, substances or materials are to be stored or used at those warehouses or moved into or out of them on a recurrent basis, casts doubt on his conscientiousness in a public setting and whether that carelessness with what might be potential poisons or hazards might carry over to his work with the state. Another division of the State of California – the California Attorney General’s Office – in 2021 second guessed his decision to approve the warehouse next to Jurupa Hills High.

At the same time, a number of environmentalists and local citizen activist groups have become animated in opposing Warren and her agenda in Fontana, raising the possibility that remaining allied with her going into the 2024 election season may in and of itself be problematic, such that he might do as well or better politically to stand, or at least seek to stand, on his own two feet rather than maintaining his grip on Warren’s skirrtails.

With His First Go-Round In Rialto, Garcia Displayed His Propensity To Temporize On Planning & Improvment Along With His Willingness To Depart Before The Job At Hand Is Completed *from page 5*

council approved by a 4-1 vote entering into the 30-year lease of the municipal water system with American Water Works Co. As part of that deal, the city agreed to a 114.8 percent increase in water and wastewater rates by 2016, such that the average water bill of Rialto households utilizing 17,000 gallons per month was to jump from the then-current rate of \$26.27 per month to \$64.14 monthly and increase the wastewater treatment fee from \$25.97 to \$61.46 as of January 1, 2016. That move immediately provoked a response in the form of a petition drive by members of the Utility Workers of America, the union representing city water division employees, to force a city-wide referendum on the takeover. In less than seven weeks, over 6,400 signatures were gathered to meet the threshold of 3,800 valid signatures of registered voters needed to force the matter to a vote. The petitions created an opportunity for city residents to reject the takeover by means of a mail vote to be conducted by the city. If more than 50 percent of the ratepayers returned the mail-in ballots rejecting the takeover, it would not go into effect. But in a crafty piece of sleight-of-hand, Rialto officials short-circuited that challenge when they quietly took action to find another company to manage Rialto's water operations. With two swipes of a pen, the city of Rialto substituted American Water Works out of the picture and entered into a contract with San Francisco-based Table Rock Capital to take on the role of water service operator. Table Rock, doing business as Rialto Water Services LP, supplanted American Water Works Co. Inc. as the city's water and wastewater service provider, and farmed out the operation

to entities expert at water and sewer operations, one of those being the French Water Company Veolia,

Rialto received \$30 million cash and \$41 million in capital improvements in the deal but played down at the time was that Table Rock and other investors received a \$26 million equity stake, and there was a commitment that the entirety of the arrangement was to be defrayed by the floating of \$27.4 million in bonds, ultimately to be paid, at a 5.5 percent interest rate per year over 30 years, totaling \$146 million, by Rialto's residents, including those who do not get their water from the municipal water system but from the West Valley Water District. This is in addition to the 114.8 percent increase effectuated between 2012 and 2016 and any further rate increases since.

Garcia, however, had left all of that behind him, at least for the time, when he ditched Rialto to take on the position of city manager in Moreno Valley.

As he perhaps should have recognized, politics in the 196,577-population Riverside City was at least twice as complex, and shot through with on the order of five or six times the danger as was the case in 99,657-population Rialto. The danger was exacerbated by the primary feature of Garcia's municipal management formula, which is that his central function as a city manager is to enable his political masters or at least those political masters who appear to be most in charge of the city they head.

Just as was the case in Colton in San Bernardino County, in Moreno Valley in Riverside County the FBI and U.S. Attorney's Office had caught wind of what, at least as far as appearances went, seemed to be some highly questionable activity and use

of local government authority and discretion.

The council that hired Garcia consisted of District 1 Councilman Jesse Molina; District 2 Councilman Richard Stewart, who was then the mayor; District 3 Councilwoman Robin Hastings; District 4 Councilman Marcelo Co; and District 5 Councilman William Batey.

Land development deals in which a degree of favoritism was being shown to certain entities, in particular ones who had an established reputation for throwing money around and generosity toward the politicians who favored them with their votes, had come to investigators' attention, including ones with the Riverside District Attorney's Office, the California Attorney General's Office and the FBI.

Of some interest were Iddo Benzeevi, a notable developer and the president and CEO of Highland Fairview, as well as real estate broker Jerome "Jerry" Stephens. Still, getting traction in the investigation was difficult.

In November 2011, a businessman seeking to open a business at a specific site in Moreno Valley and looking for land in the city upon which to locate another business venture asked for Co's assistance in dealing with the city on the former undertaking. Co told the businessman he could assist him and that he would use his influence as a council member to effectuate a zone change if the land the businessman obtained had zoning incompatible with the use the businessman intended for it. Co also told the businessman he would provide him with "inside information" available to him as a member of the city council relating to future zoning changes and development projects and that the businessman should keep it under his hat that the information was coming him.

Co told the businessman he had already succeeded in getting his "people" appointed to the planning commis-

sion and that if he could get his chosen candidates selected to the city council, he could get any project he wanted passed, saying he was seeking to control at least four of the five votes on the city council to guarantee the three-vote majority needed to pass any item on the agenda. Co also said that once in place, the four candidates working league could "rotate" their votes, with one of them entering a no vote on development items so that it would not appear that they were voting in lockstep with one another.

Co gave the businessman a primer on how he could make donations without that money being directly tied to him such as making the donations through the names of the businessman's friends or family members, making loans to the candidates that would be forgiven or entrusting the money to Co so that Co could make the donations.

The businessman contacted the FBI and in January 2012, the businessman introduced Co to an FBI agent who was masquerading as a land broker looking to purchase property on behalf of foreign and domestic investors. Co told the undercover FBI agent that he could assist him in finding property in Moreno Valley and that if the land needed to be rezoned, Co could ensure it was rezoned. Co repeated the pitch he had made to the businessman, telling the undercover FBI agent that he needed assistance funding the campaigns of candidates he supported. He assured the undercover agent that he could get any project that would go before the Moreno Valley City Council approved once he had the candidates he supported elected and in place, that he intended to coordinate the rezoning of Moreno Valley with the candidates he was supporting and that he would inform the undercover agent of what changes were to be made and the timing involved. Co sought from the busi-

nessman and the undercover FBI agent \$50,000 to \$100,000 to achieve his elective objectives in the 2012 elections. At a meeting between Co, the businessman and the FBI agent on April 13, 2012, the undercover agent gave Co \$10,000 in cash and Co pledged to support any project the undercover agent brought before the city council. Co said he would, and did, use \$3,000 of the \$10,000 provided to him to support someone he characterized as one of his candidates, Tom Owings running in Moreno Valley's District 3, and \$3,000 to support another of someone he referred to as one of his candidates, Victoria Baca running in District 5.

In the summer of 2012, Co met with the undercover agent and proposed selling him 30 acres, later appraised as worth \$710,000 and which Co maintained was worth \$3 million, to the undercover agent for \$5,360,000. Upon the election of Owings and Baca, Co said, the 30 acres would be rezoned to any use the undercover agent specified. Co reemphasized the importance of getting Owings and Baca elected. The undercover agent provided him with another \$5,000.

On November 6, 2012, both Owings and Baca were elected and Jesse Molina was reelected in District 1.

On December 4, 2012, Co met with the undercover agent, informing him that with Owings and Baca now in place on the city council, the troika, which he referred to as "Club 3-0" would be able to effectuate the repurposing of the 30 acres using a zoning overlay rather than a general plan amendment, which would allow the change to be made much more quickly. He offered the undercover agent a promise that once the agent purchased the property, he would make sure the land was rezoned as part of the overlay process. He then worked out an arrangement with the undercov-

er agent that the undercover agent would pay \$5.36 million of the land but that the recorded contract for the purchase would reflect only a \$3 million sale, with the remaining \$2.36 million being provided as cash on the side, allowing Co to avoid paying taxes on the \$2.36 million. During a January 30, 2013 meeting, Co and the FBI agent agreed to the deal and having the agent draw up a fraudulent loan document showing the \$2.36 million as a loan. The undercover agent then provided Co with \$2.36 million in cash. The entire transaction was caught on video.

There was another factor in the investigation, although for laymen on the outside looking in, it is somewhat difficult to ascertain what role it played in the overall scheme of things. Councilman Richard Stewart, the longest serving member of the council with more than two decades on the panel who had been the mayor when Garcia was hired as city manager, had a glimpse or two or three or four of how those business entities active in the community with a substantial stake in the way City Hall conducted itself had a way of befriending and showing largesse toward his council colleagues. It is known, although details are sketchy, that he had been approached and that, if he had not been directly offered some tangible benefits in return for his votes, as much had been hinted at. He was not impervious to the indicators that the FBI was snooping around Moreno Valley and at some point, in either late 2012 or early 2013, he had begun a dialogue with the FBI.

In April 2013, FBI and IRS agents, armed with search warrants and backed by a crew of investigators with the Riverside County District Attorney's Office, raided the homes of Molina, Owings, Co and Baca.

What many never

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In Moreno Valley, Garcia Once More Showed His Talent For Finding A Way To Go To Work For Politicians On The Take *from page 7*

knew and others suspected was out of the bag. Over the next week, the buzz and volume of background noise and whispers in and around Moreno Valley intensified to a roar. It was not missed by anyone that Garcia's formula for ingratiating himself with the city councils he served included enabling those elected officials to take actions that were not popular with or entirely appreciated by those officials' constituents in such a way that the council members, either collectively or individually, could avoid be held accountable or blamed. At that point, the sordid details of everything that Co had been up to were not squarely before the public, but just enough was known that virtually anyone connected to City Hall had suffered a black eye. Just as the accusations and counteraccusations had reached a crescendo and the questions were crystalizing as to just how much city

staff had been enabling a crooked cabal of politicians in carrying out their depredations, in the middle of the Moreno Valley City Council meeting on May 14, 2013, in front of man, God and everyone else, having realized that he no longer had to expose himself in public as some sort of spectacle to be gawked at and speculated about, Garcia did what he had done on so many occasions previously. He precipitously and without warning resigned as city manager on the spot.

For Garcia it was no big thing. At that point he had 32-and-two-thirds years as a public employee. He was entitled to a comfortable pension. He took it.

Over the years, Garcia had applied for multiple city manager positions throughout the Inland Empire while he was employed elsewhere. A former city council member with a city on the west end of the county who had interviewed Garcia during that city's recruitment drive for a replacement city manager recalled the way in which Garcia attempted to impress the council. "He talked about the need for revenue and how the voters weren't going to

pass any new taxes, so we could sell off our utility assets, meaning out water, use that money toward our pension debt and that when the company that took over the water utility raised rates, we wouldn't get blamed for it. He was all about making it so that as public officials we could bypass accountability. That was the goal. That's what he brought to the table."

In retirement, he offers his services as a consultant, his website says, "to cities and organizations in areas of consensus building, strategic planning and goal setting, executive coaching and leadership development; team building and conflict resolution; economic development and management problem solving. He is especially valuable to cities, Garcia says in assisting with "the city manager and city council evaluation process."

Rialto Councilman Ed Scott told the *Sentinel* he has no concern about Garcia's pattern of abrupt departures from the cities he has led in the past, pointing out that "He stayed ten years before he left the last time he was here. He did not leave on bad terms with Rialto. He's only an in-

terim manager, we figure probably until December. We felt we needed someone who is a little more seasoned to make sure we're on target with our budget and other issues. We are already looking toward getting a new city manager. I myself have been happy with the job Arron [Brown] has been

doing, but it it a little too much work for him to do without an assistant and that we need to have two people on board. So, now we have Henry as the interim city manager and he has gone back to being the assistant city manager. If he wants to apply for the city manager position, he can.

We felt he should not be in the interim position while we're recruiting, if he is going to be a candidate, for the sake of transparency."

Scott said that in having gotten Garcia, "I feel we were fortunate to get him. It is hard to find interim people."

Needles Planning Commission Rejects Conversion Of Motel To Apartments *from page 3*

tunities to meet mandates from the state to address residential needs, the members of the planning commission were skeptical about putting down-and-out veterans into quarters that close to where people will be shopping or tourists will be getting a first or second or third impression of Needles. With every mention of "vouchers" and Section 8," members of the commission would cringe.

Another issue that tripped Ghadimian up was his inability to pull the final trigger on the Sage Motel project. While he has made admirable progress in the renovations and improvements there, the

federal government – the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, backed away from funding it as an assisted living facility. It later committed to supporting the effort through its veteran housing voucher division, but has cited numerous reasons for withholding those. As a result, the motel, located at 1624 West Broadway Street, remains vacant.

Meanwhile, Ghadimian is chomping at the bit to begin renovating the delapidated and boarded up the 400 Motor Inn, which lies immediately south of the Baker Emergency Services station and slightly east of Cub's liquor store, just north of the EconoLodge.

Patrick Martinez, assistant city manager/director of development services indicated that the existing parking units at the motel would

be more than adequate for the vehicles of residents.

The commission was skeptical of that assumption. Commissioner Linda Kidd said she believed residents would be likely to own more than a single car.

Nearby business owners were less than receptive, as well. The DeAtley Brothers – David and Derek, who own Deco Food Service, which is directly across the street from the motel – did not want what Ghadimian was proposing.

Though two of the commission's members, Kevin Ostby and Bob Rath, expressed enthusiasm for Ghadimian's willingness to at last make something of the property, commissioners Michael Wright, Barbara Beard, Scott Dressler, Will Bosboom, and Linda Kidd rejected his plan.

Public Notices

FBN 20230006813
The following entities are doing business primarily in San Bernardino County as SMARTHIRE, A DIVISION OF KROUT & SCHNEIDER, INC. 4650 ARROW HWY, #E2 MONTCLAIR, CA 91763; KROUT & SCHNEIDER, INC. 4650 ARROW HWY, #E2 MONTCLAIR, CA 91763
The business is conducted by: A CORPORATION registered with the State of California under the number CO535332. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: December 8, 2020. 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 17913. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing.
s/ MARK A. MCCLAIN, Vice President
Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: 7/6/2023
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 J6748
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 on July 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2023.

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FBN 20230005436
The following entity is doing business primarily in San Bernardino County as MY PRO FRESH CHEF 12207 CENTRAL AVE CHINO, CA 91710 MY PRO FRESH CHEF 2575 THUNDER MOUNTAIN ROAD UPLAND, CA 91784 26444 SILVERADO CT MORENO VALLEY, CA 92555; TERESITA GARCIA SAPIEN 26444 SILVERADO CT MORENO VALLEY, CA 92555
The business is conducted by: A CORPORATION. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: May 31, 2018. 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/ ISAAC SANDOVAL, President
Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: 5/25/2023
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 J5473
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 on

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July 7, 14, 21 & 28, 2023.

NOTICE OF PETITION TO ADMINISTER ESTATE OF: FELIPE PULIDO CARDENAS

CASE NO. PROSB2300870

To all heirs, beneficiaries, creditors, contingent creditors, and persons who may otherwise be interested in the will or estate, or both of FELIPE PULIDO CARDENAS has been filed by GABRIEL PULIDO VILLANUEVA in the Superior Court of California, County of SAN BERNARDINO. THE PETITION FOR PROBATE requests that GABRIEL PULIDO VILLANUEVA be appointed as personal representative to administer the estate of the decedent.

THE PETITION requests authority to administer the estate under the Independent Administration of Estates Act. (This authority will allow the personal representative to take many actions without obtaining court approval. Before taking certain very important actions, however, the personal representative will be required to give notice to interested persons unless they have waived notice or consented to the proposed action.) The independent administration authority will be granted unless an interested person files an objection to the petition and shows good cause why the court

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should not grant the authority. A hearing on the petition will be held AUGUST 15, 2023 at 9:00 a.m. in Dept. No. S37 at Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino, 247 West Third Street, San Bernardino, CA 92415, San Bernardino District.

Filed: July 10, 2023
Brenda Cordero, Deputy Court Clerk
IF YOU OBJECT to the granting of the petition, you should appear at the hearing and state your objections or file written objections with the court before the hearing. Your appearance may be in person or by your attorney. IF YOU ARE A CREDITOR or a contingent creditor of the decedent, you must file your claim with the court and mail a copy to the personal representative appointed by the court within the later of either (1) four months from the date of first issuance of letters to a general personal representative, as defined in section 58(b) of the California Probate Code, or (2) 60 days from the date of mailing or personal delivery to you of a notice under Section 9052 of the California Probate Code. Other California statutes and legal authority may affect your rights as a creditor. You may want to consult with an attorney knowledgeable in California law. YOU MAY EXAMINE the file kept by the court. If you are a person interested in the estate, you may file with the court a Request for Special Notice

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(form DE-154) of the filing of an inventory and appraisal of estate assets or of any petition or account as provided in Probate Code section 1250. A Request for Special Notice form is available from the court clerk. Attorney for Gabriel Pulido Villanueva:

R. SAM PRICE
SBN 208603
PRICE LAW FIRM, APC
454 Cajon Street
REDLANDS, CA 92373
Phone (909) 328 7000
Fax (909) 475 9500
sam@pricelawfirm.com

Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel on July 14, 21 & 28, 2023.

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME

CASE NUMBER CIVSB 2315620

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner: TIMOTHY SCOTT GLASS a/k/a TIMOTHY SCOTT JIMERSON filed with this court for a decree changing names as follows:

TIMOTHY SCOTT GLASS a/k/a TIMOTHY SCOTT JIMERSON to TIMOTHY SCOTT JIMERSON

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above

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must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

Notice of Hearing:
Date: 08/23/2023
Time: 08:30 AM
Department: S14

The address of the court is Superior Court of California, County of San Bernardino San Bernardino District-Civil Division 247 West 3rd Street, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0210

To appear remotely, check in advance of the hearing for information about how to do so on the court's website. To find your court's website, go to www.courts.ca.gov/find-my-court.htm

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that a copy of this order be published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel in San Bernardino County California, once a week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing of the petition.

Dated: 07/06/2023
Judge of the Superior Court: Brian S McCarville

Attorney for Timothy Scott Glass aka Timothy Scott Jimerson:

Charles D. Ferrari (State Bar Number 130186)
Ferrari Law, P.C.
8333 Foothill Blvd., Suite 100-412

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Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730
Phone: (877) 577-7223
cferrari@ferrariilawoffices.com

Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel on 07/14/2023, 07/21/2023, 07/28/2023, 08/04/2023

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME

CASE NUMBER CIVSB 2315827

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS: Petitioner: EVA LESLIE ORDONEZ filed with this court for a decree changing names as follows:

LESLIE BELEN MENENDEZ ORDONEZ to LESLIE MENENDEZ

THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.

Notice of Hearing:
Date: 08/23/2023
Time: 08:30 AM

