

Perception Of Political Considerations In The Delaying Of I-10 Toll Lane Openings

San Bernardino County's more sophisticated political observers have discerned a connection between the continuing series of delays that have plagued the opening of the first phase of toll lanes on the I-10 Freeway to the abiding ambition and fragile electoral viability of a host of politicians who are up for reelection this year.

The controversial pay-to-use lanes, which were originally slated to

open by mid-2022 and no later than early 2023, are at this point unlikely to bear traffic any earlier than late November of this year if not until early 2025. Ironically, while only a few of the officeholders who supported those key decisions relating to the toll lanes nearly a decade ago are up for reelection in November, an effort now appears to be underway to assist any and all incumbents, including

those who opposed the project, from being associated with that decision by the county's voters and therefore voted out of office.

San Bernardino County's transportation agency now goes by the straightforward title of the San Bernardino County Transportation Agency and its acronym SBCTA. It adopted that new name on January 1, 2016, having previously been known as San Ber-

nardino Associated Governments, or its acronym, SANBAG. Founded as a council of governments and joint powers authority by the County of San Bernardino and its then-14 constituent cities – San Bernardino, Colton, Redlands, Ontario, Upland, Needles, Chino, Rialto, Barstow, Fontana, Montclair, Victorville, Loma Linda and Adelanto – SANBAG was overseen by a 19-member board of di-

rectors composed of the five county supervisors as well as representatives from those 14 incorporated cities who were either each city's mayor or designated council member. Ultimately, with the incorporation of Rancho Cucamonga, Grand Terrace, Big Bear Lake, Highland, Hesperia, Apple Valley, Chino Hills, Twentynine Palms, Yucaipa and Yucca Valley, SANBAG grew to represent

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61 Former SBC Employees Are Members Of The Quarter Million Dollar Pension Club

By Mark Gutglueck

There are currently 61 former San Bernardino County employees who are each receiving a pension of more than one quarter of a million dollars each year.

Former County Counsel Ruth E. Stringer, who was with the county for 33.44 years and retired in 2011, is pulling a \$391,680.95 per year pension.

Former County Counsel Michelle Blakemore, who was with the county for 32.11 years and retired in 2021, receives an annual retirement stipend of \$378,362.80.

Former Undersheriff Richard A. Beemer, who was with the department for 38.82 years and retired in 2010, will receive \$357,945.18 in 2024.

Former Sheriff Rodney R Hoops, who was employed by the sheriff's department for 34.23 years and retired in 2012, receives an annual pension of \$342,378.66.

Hoop's handpicked successor, Sheriff John McMahon, who was employed with the department for 36.22 years, retiring in 2021, is to receive \$326,534.33 in benefits this year.

Former Assistant District Attorney Dennis D. Christy, who was a prosecutor for 35.96 years and left the county in 2012, receives an annual pension of \$323,335.25.

Dennis Draeger, who was the elected assessor-recorder at the end of his 39.81 years with San Bernardino County when he left in 2015, is set to receive \$321,423.05 in 2024.

Former As- See P 3

Rialto & City Manager Reach "Mutual" Departure Agreement As His Past Emerges

With no fanfare, Rialto's recently-hired city manager last month was placed on administrative leave and then voluntarily resigned after a series of conflicts with the city's existing staff alienated at least four council members.

In January, 67-year-old David Carmany, who had been the city manager in West Covina, La Puente, Manhattan

Beach, Seal Beach, Pacifica, Malibu and Agoura Hills, was brought in as a replacement for Marcus Fuller, who had served as city manager from May 2021 through January 2023.

Carmany's inability to forge a lasting managerial niche among the city's employees and its city council replicates a pattern that extends back more than 24 years, dur-

ing which the city has now had 12 administrators, potentially leaving the city essentially rudderless until after the upcoming November election, with what is likely to be no more than an interim city manager elevated from department head status to oversee municipal function in the 22.34-square mile city of 102,965 on a day-to-day basis.

At the turn of the millennium, Joseph Guzetta was Rialto's city manager. He was replaced in 2001 by Henry Garcia, who remained in place for a decade. Upon Garcia's departure for greener grass in Moreno Valley, the city first tapped then-Redevelopment Director Robb Steel to oversee its operations and then conferred the acting city manager role on Po-

lice Chief Mark Kling. Mike Story was selected to serve as city manager thereafter. When Story left in December 2017, Ahmad Ansari, the city's one-time public works director and city engineer, served as interim city administrator. There after, Rialto Fire Chief Sean Grayson took on the temporary assignment. In June 2019, Rod Foster, the

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GOP Central Committee Member Sabino Chosen To Replace Robles On GT City Council

In a specially called meeting on April 23, the Grand Terrace City Council sifted through four applicants and appointed Michelle Sabino to complete the term of former member Sylvia Robles, who has served on the city council since 2012 but resigned in March more than three-quarters of the time through her third term.

Sabino is a speech therapist by trade and

a political operative by choice. She is a member of the San Bernardino county Republican Central Committee and a major player within the Inland Empire Business Alliance Political Action Committee.

Sabino was chosen with two votes, those of Mayor Bill Hussey and Councilman Ken Henderson. Councilman Doug Wilson voted for Ronald Perez and Coun-

cilman Jeff Allen favored Vincent Rasso.

Robles, who would have been up for election in November, intended to leave the council in December, after which she and her husband intended to retire to Orange County. What she referred to as an "excellent opportunity" to trade their Grand Terrace home for one in San Clemente presented itself earlier this year.

Accepting that officer necessitated her resignation from the council.

Sabino is a whirlwind of political energy. Not only is she a member of the central committee, she is a member of that organization's executive board. She is heavily involved with Inland Empire Business Alliance Political Action Committee, which collects large amounts of money from deep-

pocketed business interests and entrepreneurs and vectors donations to local, state and federal candidates the political action committee feels will further the interests of those businesses. In doing so, the Inland Empire Business Alliance has generally supported Republican candidates. Still, it has occasionally promoted Democrats.

This has now proven problematic for

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Arrest Of Man At 29 Palms Casino On Open Firearms Carrying Charge Raises

Security Guards at the Tortoise Rock Casino and San Bernardino County Sheriff's Deputies working out of the Morongo Basin Sheriff's Station opened a can of worms on the night of April 23 that is likely to be soldered shut once again with the arrest of 25-year-old Kyler Wiggins, Jr. on a open display of a firearm charge.

On the night in ques-

tion, a casino employee saw Wiggins carrying a gun, which was tucked into his pants, with the handle clearly visible.

The employee alerted the casino's security detail. Upon security guards seeking to contact him, Wiggins bolted from the casino and went into the desert area beyond the casino parking lot, where he buried the gun. The casino's secu-

rity personnel, having contacted the sheriff's department, detained Wiggins. Upon the arrival of sheriff's deputies, who were told that a gun grip was clearly visible above his waistband while he was in the casino prior to his abrupt departure upon being confronted, a search of the field where Wiggins had fled was initiated. A black Glock-17, which

later turned out to be registered to Wiggins, was found.

The deputies took custody of Wiggins, who arrested him for carrying a weapon and being drunk in public. He was booked at the sheriff's station, cited and then released.

It is not clear whether the gun, either when it was found or while in Wiggins' possession in

the casino, was loaded.

The district attorney's office is struggling with the circumstances surrounding the incident and arrest as well as by the law applicable to the situation. Similar cases in the past in San Bernardino County have stung the arresting agencies and their affiliate municipalities or jurisdictions. A change in California's

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Enthusiasm For Carmany On The Part Of Three Council Members Gave Way To Skepticism Over His Managerial Suitability In Less Than A Month *from front page*

former city manager of Colton and Laguna Niguel and the de facto city manager of Upland and Hesperia, was hired a city manager. In short order, however, Foster grew crosswise of Mayor Debra Robertson when she was hit with adverse publicity relating to a nonprofit entity that employed her daughter receiving funds and free lease accommodations through the city, and in October 2020, Foster voluntarily departed. Foster was temporarily replaced by Police Chief Kling, while the city council carried out a city manager recruitment that involved 85 applicants. In June 2021, Marcus Fuller, the assistant city manager of Palm Springs who had been Rialto's public works director from 2012 to 2014, became city manager. Ultimately, however, that didn't work out, and Fuller departed in January 2023. He was replaced by Aron Brown, the director of information technology in Palm Springs who had likewise acceded to deputy city manager in that city and then accompanied Fuller to Rialto as to serve as deputy city manager. In July 2023, the city called upon the at-that-point retired Garcia to return to Rialto, supplanting Brown, while it again sought a full-fledged city manager.

Over the summer and into the fall of 2023, all five members of the city council, relying upon an evaluation of the 37 competing applicants carried out by the Laguna Niguel-based JL Group LLC initially winnowed that field to 7 candidates until, in early January, there were what were deemed three finalists for the post, including Carmany. Based upon the JL Group analysis, the five reached a consensus that

Carmany was the best of the three, with at least three of those rather enthusiastic about him. At that point, Councilman Baca and Councilman Ed Scott, were reluctant to make a commitment and were contemplating, if one or more of their council colleagues would have been willing to do so, extending the recruitment/search.

Internally and behind the scenes, a lobbying effort to promote Carmany was ongoing, which included the advocacy of former Assemblyman and one-time Mayor of West Covina Roger Hernández. Ultimately, with Councilman Rafael Trujillo and Councilman Andy Carrizales strongly in favor of Carmany, and Councilman Baca favorably disposed toward him, on January 23, Carmany was hired on a split 3-to-2 vote, with Baca, Trujillo and Carrizales prevailing, Scott dissenting and Mayor Robertson abstaining because she had not been in attendance at the closed-door meeting of the council during which Carmany's qualifications and suitability were discussed. Mayor Robertson nevertheless expressed her belief that his choice was merited.

That vote approved giving Carmany a five-year contract, starting with a first year annual salary of \$354,994 subject to-be-approved three percent annual increases, together with yearly pay add-ons and perquisites of \$43,936, benefits of \$74,227 plus an \$89,454.48 contribution toward his pension for a total annual compensation of \$562,611.48. That was a substantial increase over what he had been making in West Covina in 2023, where he was being paid 218,780.24 in salary, \$30,283 in pay add-ons and perquisites, \$24,685.15 in benefits and a \$55,130.15 contribution toward his pension for a total annual compensation of \$328,878.54.

The city and council in general signaled substantial confidence in Carmany, with Mayor Robertson heralding him as exactly what the city

was seeking in a city manager.

"His impressive track record, leadership skills, and commitment to community engagement make him the perfect fit for our city," Robertson beamed. "We are confident that under David's leadership, Rialto will continue to thrive and prosper. We are thrilled to have him here."

The honeymoon between Carmany and Rialto lasted fewer than three full weeks.

Indeed, even as the decision to hire him was being made, the *Sentinel* has learned, entities withing and connected to City Hall, including at least one of the city council members, were second guessing JL Associate's glowing report about Carmany, which at least four members of the council now agree turned over an insufficient number of rocks in looking into Carmany's municipal managerial past.

In that regard, in short order it was learned that in 2023, Carmany had voluntarily departed West Covina in lieu of being terminated.

When Carmany was hired by West Covina in 2019, it was done on a bare minimum 3-to-2 vote, with then Mayor Lloyd Johnson and Councilwoman Jessica Shewmaker opposed to his hiring. He did, though, at that time have the enthusiastic support of Councilman Tony Wu, who endorsed Carmany as the kind of "common sense" public official capable of methodically working through difficulties facing public agencies. Carmany's time in West Covina, which has had nearly as unstable of a relationship with city managers as Rialto has had with its top administrators, was star-crossed from the outset. When he came into the city manager position, West Covina was wrestling with an \$8.7 million deficit, which had in turn created unrest within the professional ranks at City Hall over deferred raises and benefit increases. Over time, Carmany was able to balance, or come close to balancing, the city's

finances. Nevertheless, in the arena of personnel management and maintaining civil working relations with his political masters, Carmany was severely challenged. By his second year in West Covina, Carmany's relationship with Wu grew testy. This was despite Carmany's efforts at supporting re-trenchment with regard to some of the city's long-term employees. At the time Carmany became city manager, some members of the city council, including Wu, had designs on forcing West Covina Fire Chief Larry Whithorn, who had started as a firefighter/paramedic with the department in 1991 and was promoted to fire chief in 2014, into retirement. Indeed, before Carmany arrived, the city was moving in that direction. After Whithorn took an extended leave medical leave in 2017 and then took further leave in 2018 to look after his ailing father, an effort to force him to retire ensued. Whithorn resisted and in the midst of the fire chief controversy, with the West Covina Firefighters Association issuing a vote of no confidence against Whithorn and Whithorn seeking to demote union members or changing their schedules and duties in reaction to their picketing City Hall, the situation deteriorat-

Sabino Crossed Up Her Republican Brethran By Endorsing & Endowing Democrats *from front page*

Sabino. The Republican Central Committee's by-laws prohibit a member of the central committee from aiding Democrats, particularly when the Democrat being aided has Republican opposition. The assistance the Inland Empire Business Alliance has provided to Democrats has led to some members of the San Bernardino County Central Committee to call from booting Sabino off of the executive board of the central committee and out of the central committee entirely. They see her as a Democratic

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ed. Some of the department's firefighters, who stood a chance at promotion with Whithorn's departure, became further embroiled in the bureaucratic fisticuffs. Then-City Manager Chris Freeland and Human Resources Director Edward Macias, at the bidding of Wu and Planning Commissioner Glenn Kennedy, were pressuring Whithorn to retire throughout 2018. In March 2019, Freeland, Macias and Finance Director Marcie Medina abruptly resigned. The city's effort to depict Whithorn as distracted and an "absentee" fire chief was in full swing when Carmany arrived shortly thereafter. Carmany took up where Freeland and Macias had left off, carrying out what he recognized as the city council's imperative to

get rid of Whithorn. He proffered Whithorn a resignation letter, which the fire chief refused to sign. When Whithorn did not go quietly into the good night, Carmany terminated him. Whithorn responded with a lawsuit in which he alleged a hostile work environment, age discrimination, harassment, defamation and both constructive and unlawful termination. Wu, despite having been a prime mover in the effort to get rid of Whithorn, and at least one other member of the city council blamed Carmany for his ham-fisted approach in firing Whithorn, believing he should have used greater skill and politesse in cashiering him and not giving the fire chief the basis upon which to file suit.

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wolf wearing the wooly disguise of a Republican sheep. They say she is a traitor, a turncoat, a Democrat agent who has insinuated herself into the Republican fold with the intent of ending the GOP's nearly 60-year hold on San Bernardino County.

So, while Sabino last week made a major stride in fulfilling her own political ambition, she is now under attack by members of her own political party. Some say this may result in her renouncing the Republican Party altogether and changing her affiliation to align herself with the Democrats.

Sabino has steadfastly refused to publicly address the controversy and has not explained

why she acted to aid Democrats involved in local races against Republicans, including members of the Republican Central Committee, such as Henry Nickel, who is vying for the city council in San Bernardino, Nick Wilson who is running for the California Assembly in the 53rd District and Mike Cargile, who is running for Congress in California's 35th Congressional District.

Some people were put off by the way in which Sabino's political savvy, particular her partisan connections, were touted. They said that governance in 3.5-square mile, 12,500-population is carried out closer to home and far away from

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Whether California Gun Law Jibes With The Second Amendment Is Not Entirely Clear *from front page*

previous permissiveness with regard to open carry that took place roughly a decade ago has not lessened but rather intensified the complexity attending such cases, as legal challenges to the constitutionality of the bans on open carrying of weapons have yet to be resolved.

In 1967, the passage of the Mulford Act prohibited the open carrying of loaded firearms without a permit. At that point, an individual with a concealed weapons permit could carry a loaded gun, concealed or unconcealed. Difficulty, however, attended the open carrying of a firearm in the Golden State, as a Los Angeles Police Department officer told the Sentinel in 2009, "It might be legal to carry a gun in the open like that, but I can guarantee you, if I am on patrol or out on the street and I see any civilian carrying a gun openly in hand or in a holster, I am going to confront whoever it is. When I do so, my gun is probably going to

be drawn and if it isn't, my hand is going to be touching the handle."

While it was previously technically legal to openly carry an unloaded firearm in California, a state law passed in 2011 made it illegal since 2012 to carry unloaded handguns in public. Since January 1, 2024, a law passed in 2023 makes it illegal to carry guns in most public places.

Such laws, however, have been challenged in court. In 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court in what might be considered a landmark decision ruled that

that New York's law on concealed weapons licenses violated the 2nd and 14th Amendments by requiring people to show a "special need for self-protection." That 6-to-3 ruling by logic is applicable to similar far-reaching gun restriction laws, such as those in California.

Last September, a three-judge panel of the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals found that a lower court "abused its discretion" when it declined to halt California's enforcement of gun laws while their constitutionality is being challenged. That ruling did not order a discontinua-

tion of the laws' enforcement, but instructed the lower court hearing a challenge of California's law that it should rethink upholding California's constitutionally questionable gun laws unless those laws can be cogently demonstrated to be in compliance with the U.S. Constitution, which, based upon the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision, would seem to not be the case.

According to a court ruling at the 11th hour in December 2023, the new California law banning open weapon carrying can be enforced while court challenges proceed. A chance exists, however, that any enforcement action now might be vacated if any of the many ongoing challenges succeed.

Open carry is permitted in California only in county's with a population of less than 200,000, within one's home or private property or in one's business, or on their private property, with the proviso that it cannot be done within the view of the public outside of the structure. Open carrying can also take place legally if someone is assisting a peace officer, doing so at a hunting or gun club, while hunting or

in support of a restraining order. Open carrying might be permitted in a potentially life-threatening situation in order to engage in self-defense.

Efforts in San Bernardino County to restrict open weapon carrying or enforce such laws have not always been successful and occasionally resulted in some discredit being shed on a city or law enforcement agency together with a monetary loss.

A case in point occurred Christopher Hacopian, a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, and Scott Gibbs, members of the Open Carry organization, were detained in handcuffs by Upland police officers who had been called to the scene of a demonstration the pro-gun group was staging at the Colonias at Crossroads commercial center off the 210 Freeway near Campus Avenue on July 13, 2011. As members of the Open Carry organization, Hacopian and Gibbs were passing out pamphlets educating the public about the Second Amendment when they were approached by two Upland police officers, who engaged in a so-called "Terry Stop," a brief detention

of a person by police on reasonable suspicion of involvement in criminal activity but short of probable cause to arrest. The pair, who were carrying holsters with unloaded firearms, were ordered to put their hands up, stop talking and get down on their knees and were then handcuffed. Their wallets were forcibly removed without their consent and they were detained well beyond the time it took the officers to ascertain that the weapons were not loaded. The officers shut off the videorecording equipment that was set up where the open carry advocates were conducting their demonstration.

The Open Carry organization claims that the California law prohibiting citizens from carrying loaded firearms is unconstitutional, but had consistently complied with the law in carrying out its demonstrations.

It was the Upland Police Department's action in precluding Hacopian's and Gibbs' First Amendment rights that Porter Ranch-based attorney Jonathan W. Birdt emphasized first in a complaint filed on behalf of Hacopian and Gibbs against the Up-

land Police Department and its officers several days after the incident, although Birdt did touch on the Second Amendment implication of what the officers had done.

Ultimately, in 2012, the matter was settled out of court with the City of Upland paying Hacopian and Gibbs \$18,600.

While the district attorney's office had not filed charges against Wiggins with regard to the April 23 incident, the arrest may impact an earlier case he was involved in.

On December 16, 2021, Wiggins was arrested in Twentynine Palms and charged with driving under the influence and not being in possession of a driver license. The matter took more than two years to be adjudicated. On January 12, 2024, the driving without a license charge was dismissed and Wiggins entered a no contest plea to misdemeanor operating a vehicle while under the influence of a drug. He was given misdemeanor probation on the condition that he enroll in a AB541 alcohol education program by February 29, 2024 and complete it by August 31, 2024.

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Public Service In San Bernardino County Has Proven Lucrative For Many Retired Public Servants *from front page*

Assistant District Attorney James B. Hackleman, retired from the county after 35.53 in 2011 and is now paid \$318,678.55 annually in retirement.

Former Assistant County Administrator Norman A. Kanold, a county employee for 33.37 years when he retired in 2009, in 2024 will be paid \$316,560.78.

Thomas L. Sutton, the county's director of special districts when he retired in 2008 after a 34.57 year tenure with the county, receives \$311,274.34 annually.

Michael Stodelle, a sheriff's captain at the end of his 37.52-year career when he retired in 2006, has a \$310,625.79

annual retirement stipend.

Former Public Defender Phyllis Morris-Green retired in 2018 after 36.65 years of representing indigent defendants and is paid \$309,053.58 yearly now that she is no longer working.

Gary Roth, who rose to assistant district attorney during his 39.09-year career before he retired in 2019, will collect a \$303,627.56 pension in 2024.

Linda Haugan, once the assistant county executive officer for human services, departed in 2016 after 35.68 years with the county and now takes in \$297,931.84 annually.

Larry Walker, who was the elected supervisor and auditor-controller, recorder and treasurer over the 29.26 years ending in 2016 and was able to arrange to purchase five more years

in the county's pension system, now pulls a \$297,663.85 pension.

John Michaelson was the head of social services before he was elevated to county administrative officer toward the end of his 30.28 years with the county. He retired in 2003, and is receiving \$297,402.51 annually.

Robert McDonald retired as assistant county administrative officer in 2002 after 33.73 years with the county. He is to be paid \$291,305.90 in 2024, or \$24,275.49 per month.

Gerald Newcombe, who became director of public works during the final five of his 35.24 years with the county before retiring in 2017, now receives \$289,459.93 annually.

Mike Ramos was district attorney from 2003 until 2018 and was a probation officer and deputy prosecutor prior to that over the span of

a 38.71-year career. In retirement, he is now being paid \$289,339.547 yearly.

Richard N. Larsen, who acceded to the position of elected treasurer-tax collector during the final decade of his 36.10 career with the county prior to his 2009 retirement, in 2024 will be provided with a \$289,023.62 pension.

Ronald Reitz was county counsel from 2004 until his 2006 retirement and spent some 29 years at lower levels in the office of county counsel before closing out his 31.91-year career. He is now receiving a \$289,010.82 annual installment on his pension.

Alan Marks, who was Reitz's predecessor, spent 32.75 years in the office of county counsel prior to his 2004 retirement, including a few years in the top spot. He now receives a \$287,544.17 pension.

Glen Pratt achieved the rank of assistant sheriff by the end of his 34.34 years with the department when he retired in 2011 and is slated to be paid \$287,441.36 this year.

Karen Bell, whose prosecutorial efforts netted her the position of chief deputy district attorney during the last ten years of her 37.7-year career, which corresponded with Mike Ramos's first decade as district attorney, retired in 2013. She is now paid \$282,663.92 annually in retirement.

Colene B. Haller, who achieved the position of chief operating officer during the latter third of her 35.71 years with the county and then retired in 2008, is to receive \$281,148.05 in 2024.

Bruce J. Zeiner, the son of former Sheriff Frank Bland's business partner who promoted through the ranks of the sheriff's department and

reached the rank of captain during his 35.22-year law enforcement career, retired in 2004. He will make \$276,408.20 in 2024.

Gurmit Sekhon, a psychiatrist employed by the county for 29.15 years before he retired in 2020, is now provided with a \$275,466.37 annual pension.

Ronald W. Bieberdorf, who zoomed up the promotion ladder within the sheriff's department under Frank Bland, Floyd Tidwell, Richard Williams and then Gary Penrod over the course of a 32.08-year career, topped out as deputy chief before leaving in 2004. He now receives a \$271,218.48 retirement stipend.

Raymond Wingerd acceded to the position of chief probation officer and was with the county for 36.27 years when he retired in 2003, ser-

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SANBAG/SBCTA's Borrowing Against Future Measure I Revenue Resulted In There Being Insufficient Funding To Widen The I-10 Freeway, Leading To What Is Soon To Prove Out As An Unpopular Toll Lane Solution *from front page*

24 municipalities and the county by means of a 29-member board. Empowered by the ¼-cent sales tax to fund transportation projects at the local governmental level made available through the Transportation Development Act, the first regional issue San Bernardino Associated Governments took on was public transit. On December 3, 1975, SANBAG adopted its bylaws and under the leadership of its maiden president, then-Fifth District Supervisor Nancy Smith, created a public transit agency to provide bus service throughout the San Bernardino Valley, known as Omnitrans. In 1976, SANBAG was officially deemed San Bernardino County's transportation commission. In 1986 SANBAG was designated the freeway emergency service authority in San Bernardino County, which provided emergency call boxes along the freeway and, later, a public-funded freeway roadside assistance service patrol.

In 1989, the SANBAG board and in particular its members drawn from the county board of supervisors – Marsha Turoci, Jon Mikels, Barbara Cram Riordan, Larry Walker and Bob Hammock – championed Measure I, a countywide ½ cent sales tax override with the proceeds devoted exclusively to improving transportation infrastructure. The county's residents gave enthusiastic passage to the measure, whereupon SANBAG, as the county's transportation authority, made a fateful decision. Rather than simply imposing the ½ cent sales tax countywide and allowing the money to accrue in interest-bearing accounts until such time as sufficient funding became available to undertake major needed transportation infrastructure projects on a pay-as-they-went basis, SANBAG at once began borrowing against

the anticipated future Measure I proceeds to initiate transportation projects at once. This ultimately created a situation in which a substantial portion of the Measure I revenue over the next generation was being eaten up by interest payments as well as the eventual return of the principal on that loaned money. This rerouting of Measure I money to financiers rather than going directly to traffic-alleviation efforts compromised SANBAG's image as the "Congestion Management Agency" for San Bernardino County it had designated itself as being in 1990.

The county's voters renewed Measure I's ½ cent sales tax authorization for 40 years in 2004, perpetuating the concept/commitment that SANBAG, and now SBCTA, would do make some appreciable inroads on the gridlock impacting the freeways throughout the county. One expectation was that the freeways would be widened, and not by a single lane but by two or three lanes. Indeed, SANBAG as early as 2009 had embraced such a concept, but simply lacked the funding to carry it out. There was a suggestion that what the agency should do is declare a moratorium on further traffic projects for three, four, five or half of a dozen years, during which time it would service and retire all of the debt it had so that it could thereafter start anew, banking the incoming Measure I funds it was receiving and from that point on paying as it went, independent upon borrowing and free of making constant debt payments. Ultimately, however, the SANBAG board rejected that approach.

With its then-current financial picture clouded by debt and ongoing demands for transportation-related improvements, all of which could not be met by the incoming Measure I funds

and other state and federal money being passed along to it, SANBAG staff formulated a freeway-widening proposal. The first comprehensive explication of the undertaking was contained in a document completed and filed in January 2012 titled the "Measure I 2010-2040 Ten Year Delivery Plan." Hidden in the concept was that the new lanes would not be provided as part of the Measure I-funded effort toward "congestion management," but would be funded by those willing to pay extra to use them. In that document, the toll lanes were not referred to as "toll lanes" but rather as HOT lanes. One needed to go to an "acronym list" at the back of the document to learn that HOT stood for "High-Occupancy Toll." The definition explained that "HOT lanes are HOV (i.e. high occupancy vehicle or car pool) lanes that also allow vehicles not meeting minimum occupancy requirements to use the lane by paying a toll."

There was resistance to the idea. At the heart of that resistance was the recognition that the county's voters in 1989 and again in 2004 and the county's consumers ever since had gone along with a higher sales tax out of the belief that government would make good on its commitment in delivering improved transportation facilities. For some, SANBAG's inability or unwillingness to live up to that commitment was maddening.

The proposed additions to the freeway were denounced as "Rolls Royce lanes" or "Cadillac lanes" or Mercedes lanes" or "Lexus lanes" by opponents, who said only the wealthy would be able to afford to use them. There were arguments presented against the toll lanes along practical grounds, including that they would not lessen gridlock but intensify it, as is on occasion the case with toll roads elsewhere in Southern California, particularly in Los Angeles County and Orange County, with traffic snarl-ups in which three, four or even five

lanes of traffic will be very slow moving or not moving at all, while next to them is or are one or two lanes being hardly used at all in which cars are zooming by at speeds nearing, at or exceeding the speed limit. Advocates against permitting toll lanes in San Bernardino County asked that the decision-makers not squander travel space on the freeway, as, out of principle or financial consideration, the majority of freeway motorists in Southern California are unwilling to pay the money required to utilize toll lanes.

The concept was opposed by former San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales, former San Bernardino County Supervisor Janice Rutherford, Chino Councilwoman/Mayor Eunice Ulloa, Ontario Mayor Paul Leon, Loma Linda Mayor/Councilman Rhodes Rigsby, former Grand Terrace Mayor Walt Stanckiewicz, former Fontana Councilman Michael Tahan, former Adelanto Mayor Rich Kerr and former Colton Councilwoman Deirdre Bennett, most of whom were outspoken in their opposition. The late-Montclair Mayor Paul Eaton librated between opposition to and support of the project, expressing different views at different times.

Toll lane supporters slowly built a consensus toward constructing the toll lanes, all the while keeping their heads down and doing so in a low-profiled manner, fearing that if the general public caught wind of what was to occur, there would be a political reckoning.

Former First District County Supervisor Robert Lovingood San Bernardino County Fourth District Supervisor Curt Hagman, former Fifth District County Supervisor James Ramos, Highland Mayor Larry McCallon, Rancho Cucamonga Mayor Lloyd Dennis Michael, Fontana Mayor Acquanetta Warren, former Barstow Mayor Julie McIntyre, former San Bernardino Mayor Carey Davis, former Upland Mayor Debbie Stone, former

Big Bear Councilman/Mayor Bill Jahn, former Upland Mayor Ray Musser, former Chino Mayor Dennis Yates, former Grand Terrace Mayor Darcy McNaboe, former Redlands Mayor Pete Aguilar, Montclair Councilman/Mayor John Dutrey, former Victorville Councilman Ryan McEachron, former Chino Hills Councilman Ed Graham, former Yucaipa Councilman Dick Riddell, former Redlands Councilman Jon Harrison, former Yucaipa Councilman David Avila, former Yucca Valley Councilman George Huntington, former Hesperia Councilman Mike Leonard, Apple Valley Town Councilman Curt Emick, Colton Councilman/now Mayor Frank Navarro, Yucca Valley Town Councilman Rick Denison, former Needles Mayor Edward Paget and Ontario Councilman Alan Wapner all have supported constructing the toll lanes, as did former Adelanto Mayor Cari Thomas, Rialto Councilman Ed Scott, former Apple Valley Town Councilman Rick Roelle, former San Bernardino Mayor Patrick Morris, former Twentynine Palms Councilman Jim Harris, along with former San Bernardino County Supervisors Neil Derry, Brad Mitzelfelt and Gary Ovitt.

On July 12, 2017, when the San Bernardino County Transportation Agency at last was tasked with deciding on whether the toll lane project would proceed, Ontario Councilman Alan Wapner, as the board's chairman at that time, along with Apple Valley Councilman Curt Emick, Colton Mayor Frank Navarro, Fontana Mayor Acquanetta Warren, Grand Terrace Mayor Darcy McNaboe, Highland Councilman Larry McCallon, Montclair City Councilman John Dutrey, Needles Mayor Edward Paget, Rancho Cucamonga Mayor Lloyd Dennis Michael, Redlands City Councilman Jon Harrison, San Bernardino Mayor Carey Davis, Upland Mayor Debbie Stone, Yucaipa Councilman David Avila, Yucca

Valley Councilman Rick Denison, First District County Supervisor Robert Lovingood and Third District County Supervisor James Ramos voted to move ahead. Casting votes in opposition were Chino Mayor Eunice Ulloa and Third District County Supervisor Josie Gonzales. Not present for the vote were Adelanto Mayor Rich Kerr, Barstow Mayor Julie McIntyre, Big Bear Lake Mayor Bill Jahn, Chino Hills Councilman Ed Graham, Hesperia Councilman Bill Holland, Loma Linda Councilman Rhodes "Dusty" Rigsby, Rialto Mayor Deborah Robertson, Twentynine Palms Councilman Joel Klink, Victorville Councilman Jim Kennedy, Second District County Supervisor Janice Rutherford and Fourth District County Supervisor Curt Hagman.

McNaboe, McIntyre, Jahn, Musser, McEachron, Graham, Riddell, Huntington, Leonard, Paget, Thomas, Roelle, Morris, Harris, Derry, Mitzelfelt, Ovitt, Stanckiewicz, Tahan, Kerr and Bennett have since been voted out of office or left voluntarily. Mayors Yates and Eaton are deceased. Aguilar is now a congressman. Circumstances suggest that McNaboe's, McEachron's, Stone's and Davis's support for the project had something to do with their political demises.

For reasons that have not been officially explicated, the project was not completed as was originally scheduled and the toll lanes did not open in the summer of 2022. Up for reelection in 2022 were Wapner, who was the SBCTA board chairman in 2017 when the project was given go-ahead and whose advocacy of the project was absolutely crucial to its passage. Also vying for reelection in 2024 were Mayor Michael and Mayor Warren, both of whose support for the program was held to be extremely important, as were Navarro, Emick, Dutrey, Rialto Councilman Ed Scott and Mc-

Continued on Page 12

The Pre-Hiring Vetting For Carmany Missed A Host Of Incompatibility Issues He Had With His Former Political Masters In At Least Three Cities *from page 2*

The deterioration of the relationship between Wu and Carmany gave rise to a deeply untoward circumstance, one that was not handled very gracefully. In the Spring of 2022, Carmany went to the West Covina Police Department, alleging that during a meeting, Wu physically threatened him. The police department, declaring a conflict of interest, passed the complaint along to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. That matter was still being investigated when, on May 5, 2023, a Los Angeles County jury found in favor of Whithorn in his suit against the city, awarding him \$4.1 million.

Furthermore, former West Covina Police Chief Marc Taylor, who was terminated by Carmany on the same day as Whithorn, has also filed an age discrimination suit against West Covina in 2020. That case, which was set to go to trial in late May 2023, was delayed, at the city's request, after the judgment in favor of Whithorn. Efforts to settle the matter short of trial have not succeeded and the matter is set to go to trial in August. If, up until the point of the judgment in favor of Whithorn, Carmany had majority support on the city council to remain as city manager, his credibility and ability to function as the city's top administrator was irretrievably compromised with the finding that he had condoned and engaged in age discrimination against Whithorn and had potentially done the same to Taylor. The council met in closed session on May 16, 2023, taking no action but making clear that Carmany had to go, or else. On May 18, he resigned as city manager.

City managers commonly lack job security. As they serve at the pleasure of the city councils in the cities where they work, they are subject

not only to the collective whim of the councils that employ them, their longevity in the positions they occupy can be jeopardized upon a change of council membership pursuant to an election. While a city manager may meet the expectations of an entire council or a majority of a given council, if the voters in that particular municipality choose to remove one or more members of a council's ruling majority in as little time as a single election cycle such that the new majority lines up with what had been a previous council minority that was at odds with the displaced majority, a city manager can be expendable virtually overnight.

Carmany has, as is common among at least a minority of city managers, been terminated or forced into resigning more than once. In 2003, he was terminated as city manager in Pacifica "for cause," which obviated the provision of his contract requiring that he be given severance pay. Carmany sued, which resulted in a settlement in which he was provided with \$175,000. Manhattan Beach City Council members unanimously dismissed Carmany as that city's top administrator in November 2013, citing the need to "move in a new direction." In doing so, Carmany was terminated without cause. The firing came within the context of a contretemps with a former Manhattan Beach employee, Patricia Schilling, who had been his executive assistant. She alleged Carmany forced her to alter figures in staff reports, shred documents and falsify financial disclosure forms. The suit also had a sexual harassment component, with the former employee alleging that Carmany would stand over her while she was at her desk and stare down her blouse. She filed a lawsuit against the city in 2014, one which was settled two years later,

with Schilling receiving \$1.5 million to drop the matter, with both sides paying their attorney fees and the city making no admission of further liability or wrongdoing.

Carmany's managerial style, in which he seeks to construct a municipal management team composed of department heads of his own preference, stands at the cutting edge of one approach toward planning, organizing, directing and controlling City Hall. If the vision of that particular manager lines up with the priorities of the council in place and such a strategy works in terms of meeting a locale's needs, such a city manager can be deemed a valuable asset to the community. On the other hand, reordering the ranks and roster of employees in a particular jurisdiction carries with it the risk that those displaced employees will take legal action, such as has been the case with Whithorn and Taylor in West Covina, Schilling in Manhattan Beach or Carmany himself in Pacifica. This can prove expensive for the city and taxpayers in that money must be expended on lawyers to defend the city and, in those cases where those defenses fail, in substantial settlements or awards.

Soon after Carmany arrived in Rialto, it became clear he was gunning to make personnel changes, i.e., displace individuals who had worked their way up into key positions at City Hall.

One of those changes was Katherine Stevens, the city's finance director. Upon Carmany's arrival, he came into a situation where the finance department was initiating its proposals for the 2024-25 budget and was dealing with replacing a previous accounting system, adapting a new set of electronic financial books with more sophisticated tracking capabilities, while having the department's personnel make the necessary adjustments to effectuate that. There were shortcomings in the previous bookkeeping system, and in making his imme-

diately assessment of what the situation entailed, the *Sentinel* is told, Carmany came to a conclusion that Stevens was in some way responsible, if not for the shortcomings of the accounting system and what it rendered in and of itself, than for tolerating those shortcomings for so long. He moved to get rid of Stevens.

Similarly, Carmany from the outset had a disaffinity for Assistant City Manager Arron Brown, something that was clear before the end of January, within days of his arrival, City Hall insiders tell the *Sentinel*. He cashiered Brown.

Though some have asserted that Carmany, in his efforts to carry out the policy directives of the council, should have been free to hire, fire, reassign and promote staff as he felt necessary to achieve the council's goals, others believe he had scapegoated Stevens and Brown, was about to do so with others and that ultimately what he was engaged in was clearing the decks of existing Rialto employees who were in the way of favored employees he had worked with in West Covina and La Puente to whom he wanted to give plum, high-salaried assignments.

So far, Rialto has ducked a couple of bullets. Brown was able to

land on his feet, moving into the position of city manager in Canyon Lake. As of this week, it does not appear that Stevens is going to take action against the city over her departure. "She's moving on with her life," someone close to the situation said.

By early April the city council had familiarized itself with the holes in the JL Group's analysis of Carmany, in particular the issues in Manhattan Beach, Pacifica and West Covina. On April 12, the council put Carmany on administrative leave. Shortly thereafter, he met with City Attorney Eric Vail. During that conference, Carmany was given the opportunity to resign. Conditional upon his agreement to leave without any further claims against the city, he is being provided with a \$119,329 severance.

Built into the arrangement is a face-saving cover story by which Carmany is at liberty to take refuge in the parallel suggestion that remaining in Rialto for what was less than one-twentieth of his 5-year duration contract was a natural outgrowth of his unwillingness to abide a general situation in which the council was engaging in micromanagement, which he was not willing to abide. Under this narrative,

Carmany made his exit accordingly, not unlike the exodus of several of the other 10 city managers before him the city burned through in less than a quarter of a century.

The \$119,329 severance paid to Carmany after his fewer than three months on the job is comparable, if not absolutely proportional, to the \$430,000 severance paid to Fuller following his 20 months on the job after he departed over what were described as managerial differences with the council.

Assistant City Manager Tanya Williams has been elevated to the position of acting city manager. It is unclear whether she will maintain that position until Carmany's replacement is found.

It is reported that the council is reluctant to make such an appointment with the November election approaching. Reportedly, Councilman Trujillo is to challenge Robertson for mayor in that contest. Consequently, the council believes it may be beneficial to wait until after the election to make such an appointment, avoiding placing a new city manager into a pressurized political environment during his or her first few months in office.

-Mark Gutglueck

Grand Terrace Settles On Sabino *from front page*

Sacramento and Washington, D.C. They suggested she incorrectly views politics through a grand prism on a grand scale.

That grandiosity appeared to be catching. In making his pitch to be appointed to replace Robles, one of her competitors, Vincent Rasso, who was the Grand Ter-

race High School student body president in 2017, touted himself as a regional and statewide policy expert.

"I seek this opportunity because of the widespread expertise I have in policy analysis and budget management, navigating and building relationships in state and federal government, as well as my background in youth and student engagement and strategic public affairs and

communications," the 24-year-old said.

While Councilman Jeff Allen found that convincing, his three colleagues did not.

Shortly after the special meeting concluded, the regularly scheduled council meeting of April 23 began. Sabino was sworn in near the beginning of the meeting and took her place on the dais.

-Mark Gutglueck

How Gun-Toting Man Will Be Held To Answer Remains Unclear *from page 3*

There is no indication yet whether the district

attorney's office will interpret what happened at

the Turtle Rock Casino on April 23 to be a violation of Wiggins' probation.

-M.G.

Pensions *from page 3*

vice for which he is now being rewarded with

\$269,686.35 annually.

James Nunn during his 39.94 years with the sheriff's department reached the rank

of deputy chief, retiring in 2003. He will collect \$268,841.32 this year.

Edward Ripley at

Continued on Page 11

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05/10/2024, 05/17/2024, 05/24/2024 CNBB18202410MT

FBN 20240003866
The following person is doing business as: L'MORE HCL. 3970 CYPRESS LN CHINO HILLS, CA 91709; MAILING ADDRESS P.O BOX 1076 CHINO HILLS, CA 91709; COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO MARIA G MORA ALVAREZ 3970 CYPRESS LN CHINO HILLS, CA 91709. The business is conducted by: AN INDIVIDUAL. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ MARIA G MORA AL-

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VAREZ, OWNER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: APRIL 22, 2024 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 05/03/2024, 05/10/2024, 05/17/2024, 05/24/2024 CNBB18202411MT

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CLAIR, CA 91763; MAILING ADDRESS 9769 RAMONA AVENUE MONTCLAIR, CA 91763; COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO BRUCE C SANTANA 9769 RAMONA AVENUE MONTCLAIR, CA 91763. The business is conducted by: AN INDIVIDUAL. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ BRUCE C SANTANA, OANER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: APRIL 22, 2024 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name state-

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ment 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 05/03/2024, 05/10/2024, 05/17/2024, 05/24/2024 CNBB18202412MT

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transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares as true information which he or she knows to be false is guilty of a crime (B&P Code 179130. I am also aware that all information on this statement becomes Public Record upon filing. s/ ALVARO VANEGAS, OWNER Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: APRIL 22, 2024 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or com-

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mon law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 05/03/2024, 05/10/2024, 05/17/2024, 05/24/2024 CNBB18202413MT

FBN 20240003864
The following person is doing business as: BORN 2 ROOF. 9769 RAMONA AVENUE MONTCLAIR, CA 91763; MAILING ADDRESS 9769 RAMONA AVENUE MONTCLAIR, CA 91763 COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO BORN 2 ROOF INC 9769 RAMONA AVENUE MONTCLAIR, CA 91763 STATE OF INCORPORATION 3624038 The business is conducted by: A CORPORATION. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above on: N/A By signing, I declare that all information in this statement is true and correct. A registrant who declares

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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/ BRUCE C SANTANA, PRESIDENT Statement filed with the County Clerk of San Bernardino on: 04/22/2024 I hereby certify that this copy is a correct copy of the original statement on file in my office San Bernardino County Clerk By:/Deputy Notice-This fictitious name statement expires five years from the date it was filed in the office of the county clerk. A new fictitious business name statement must be filed before that time. The filing of this statement does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14400 et seq., Business and Professions Code). Published in the San Bernardino County Sentinel 05/03/2024, 05/10/2024, 05/17/2024, 05/24/2024 CNBB18202414MT

Many Who Retired Prior To 2013, "Spiked" Their Pensions from page 3

tained the post of deputy chief within the sheriff's department, working there for 33.37 until his 2009 retirement. He now is paid \$268,304.20 per year.

Tanya Bratton's 38.75 years with the county netted her constant promotions, including one to the post of deputy executive officer. She exited the county's employ in 2021, and now makes \$267,928.36 per year in retirement.

James Coronado acceded to deputy chief with the sheriff's department, with which he logged 32.92 years. He retired in 2010 and now is paid \$266,502.34 annually.

Ronald Perret is another of the sheriff's department's former deputy chiefs, having departed after 33.19 years in 2005, which merits him a \$266,133.64 annual pension.

Jeffrey Rigney, the son of the county's long-time chief administrative officer Phil Rigney, followed in his father's footsteps, becoming one of the county's top echelon executive officers. He headed one of the county's most important offices as the director of special districts. His 35.46 career with the county closed out in 2019. He is paid \$265,669.24 annually in retirement.

Robert Pepler lasted 31.39 years with the sheriff's department, serving under sheriff's Frank Bland, Floyd

Tidwell, Dick Williams and Gary Penrod, the latter of whom named him as his undersheriff, the second highest post in the department. He departed in 2005 and now is paid \$264,762.44 every year for the work he carried decades ago.

Pete Ortiz was one of the first Hispanic high-achievers within the sheriff's department, having been appointed captain to oversee the Rancho Cucamonga station before being promoted to deputy chief. He retired in 2012 after 34.69 years with the department and in 2024 will receive \$263,685.07.

James McReynolds, who worked for the county for 29.74 years and eventually became the director of the department of behavioral health, retired in 1999. He receives \$261,981.32 annually.

Michael D. Cardwell achieved the rank of sheriff's captain while serving under Floyd Tidwell, then hit a glass ceiling in the department thereafter and was unable to wangle a promotion from either Sheriff Dick Williams or Sheriff Gary Penrod. In 2004, after 32.02 years in law enforcement, he retired. He is provided with \$261,815.68 yearly.

Warren S. Nobles was named assistant sheriff, the department's third highest ranking post, by Gary Penrod. In 2011, under Sheriff Rod Hoops, he retired after a 32.1-year career, missing out on the opportunity to be named sheriff when Hoops retired the following year. He is the recipient of an annual \$261,664.71 pension.

Roger A. Stocker re-

tired in 2010 as a fire agency division chief after 33.33 years with the county fire department. He will make \$261,640.21 in 2024.

Gregg Herbert's 34.93 years with the sheriff's department came to a close in 2021, at which point he was the seventh-highest ranking member of the department as one of its deputy chiefs. His annual pension currently stands at \$261,574.288.

Daniel Haueter's 32.31 years as an attorney within the office of county counsel came to an end in 2011, at which point he was principal assistant county counsel. In retirement, the county pays him a \$261,528.59 yearly pension.

Terry J. Welsh, a fire agency division chief who lasted 33.25 years with the county, retired in 2010. He is now paid a \$261,119.88 annual retirement stipend.

Stephen Higgins, the son of a high-ranking sheriff's officer and a friend of Sheriff John McMahon, retired at a relatively young age in 2020 after 33.31 years with the department during which he achieved the rank of assistant sheriff. He makes \$259,100.21 per year at this point.

Sheree Stewart, who shattered the glass ceiling in the sheriff's department to reach the position of deputy chief despite her gender, retired in 2013 after a 31.37-year law enforcement career. She collects a \$258,331.62 annual pension.

Robert Fonzi, who twice narrowly missed being named as sheriff when both Sheriff Gary Penrod and then Sher-

iff Rod Hoops stepped down before each of their last terms in elective office ended, nevertheless achieved the position of undersheriff. His retirement, after a 32.55-year career, came in 2014. He will be paid \$257,948.56 in 2014.

Errol Mackzum, the county's auditor-controller, whose tenure included the years the scandal-plagued regimes of county administrative officers Harry Mays and James Hlawek and Treasurer Thomas O'Donnell were in place, retired in 1999 after 37.84 years with the county. He is provided with \$256,490.70 annually.

Ronald Cochran, who promoted to the position of assistant sheriff, retired in 2016 after 31.35 years with the sheriff's department. He enjoys a \$255,099.55 pension.

Stephen Dorsey, the son of high-achieving sheriff's deputy chief Ray Dorsey, himself became a deputy chief and lasted 34.1 years with the department before cashing out in 2019. He is paid \$255,060.62 annually in retirement.

Assistant Sheriff David Williams retired in 2017 after 32.43 years with the department. He now receives \$254,956.74 annually.

Rod Torres, who spent 33.62 years with the sheriff's department and reached the rank of deputy chief, retired in 2019. He collects a \$254,886.72 annual pension.

Keith Montgomery registered nurse at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center 3.93 2016 \$254,859.41

Lana Tomlin made a steady progression up-

ward during her 30.75-year career with the sheriff's department, achieving the rank of deputy chief and then topping that in 2018 to become assistant sheriff, making her the fourth highest ranking member of the department at the time and the most highly positioned woman ever in the department. She opted into retirement in 2021 and at this point is pulling a \$254,851.35 annual pension.

Jim Cusimano retired from the department as undersheriff in 2018, foregoing the opportunity of becoming the appointed sheriff that presented itself three years later. His 31.28-years with the department today translates into a \$254,839.08 annual pension.

Samuel Lucia made it to the position of sheriff's department deputy chief during his 31.51-year law enforcement career, which ended in 2021. He makes \$254,736.88 per year in retirement.

Patrick Mead, the director of public works, retired in 2007 after 34.79 years with the county. His retirement stipend at present has grown to \$253,865.33 a year.

Daniel Odom, a deputy fire chief, retired in 2014 upon reaching 35.29 years with the county. His pension stands at \$253,616.73.

Sheriff's Captain Michael J. Howell retired in 2009 after 37.81 years with the county. He collects \$252,779.40 annually as a retiree.

Jean-Rene Basle, an in-house county lawyer for 33.49 years, retired as county counsel in 2018, and now makes

\$250,235.66 in retirement pay.

Vana Olson, San Bernardino County's public works director in the first decade of the Third Millennium, retired in 2009 after 29.18 years with the county. She is to receive \$250,169.89 this year as her annual pension entitlement.

The 61 San Bernardino County retirees provided with a pension of more than a quarter of a million dollars per year account for just a fraction – slightly more than half of one percent – of the now-retired participants in San Bernardino County's retirement plan, which is administered by the entity known as the San Bernardino County Employees Retirement Association, or SBCERA. Under SBCERA's rules, retirees are entitled to a 2 percent cost of living increase to their pension every year.

Some of those participating in SBCERA are provided with more generous retirement benefits than others. Virtually all of the 61 top pension recipients fall within the category of former employees receiving pensions governed by the most generous terms SBCERA offers. Management employees and sworn law enforcement officers have pensions calculated by a formula which pays each retiree his or her top annual salary as a county employee times the number of years worked times three percent.

Lower ranking non-law enforcement employees use formulas that consist of either his or her
Continued on Page 12

To Stave Off An Inevitable Political Retribution, SBCTA Is Inventing Delays For The Opening Of I-10 Toll Lanes *from page 4*

Callon.

Wapner, Michael, Warren, Navarro, Emick, Dutrey, Scott, Denison, McCallon, Ramos and Aguilar were all reelected in 2022. There is a widespread belief that the toll lane project was delayed for the purpose of allowing all 11 of those avoid having to deal with the issue of their support of the toll lanes while in the midst of a reelection effort.

Reelected in the March 5, 2024 California Primary election two months ago were all of the incumbent members of the board of supervisors due for election this year: First District Supervisor Paul Cook, Third District Supervisor Dawn Rowe and Fifth District Joe Baca, Jr. Cook, Rowe and Baca had no hand in the original approval of the I-10 toll lanes. Also reelected in March was Rigsby.

Of those who participated in the July 2017 vote with regard to the toll lanes or were to have voted but were not present at the July 12, 2017 meeting, Ulloa and Robertson are up for reelection in the cities they represented seven years ago in the upcoming November 2024 election. Ramos is up for reelection as well, but not as supervisor but rather for his position in the Assembly, which he has inhabited since 2018. This is true as well for Aguilar, who was no longer a member of the SBCTA board in 2017 when the vote to approve the toll

lanes was made, but who had, nonetheless, supported the project previously.

There is a perception that SBCTA is stalling with regard to the completion of the toll lane project to hold off what many believe will be an inevitable backlash against those politicians the public sees as responsible for the toll lanes being built. Such a show of voter disapproval this November would be accurately aimed only at Ramos and Aguilar, as they are the only individuals on that ballot who actually supported the toll lane project. Still, the recollection or knowledge of the voting public is less than perfect, and it is impressions that can be more telling once the ballot boxes begin to fill. Politicians in general are likely to be held responsible for whatever governmental policy is put into place. That voter resentment is likely to be vectored at any incumbent running, whether he or she is actually the architect or supporter of the policy being resented. Those most likely to be associated with the toll lanes that will soon be in place are, logically, those who are members of the San Bernardino County Transportation Agency. The current members of the SBCTA board at present include the previously active personages of Ulloa, Navarro, Warren, McCallon Wapner, Michael, Dutrey Robertson, Klink, Denison and Haggman, along with newcomers who were not directly involved in the toll lane matter, consisting of Third District County Supervisor Dawn Rowe, who is now the board chairwoman, along with Chino Hills City Coun-

cilman Ray Marquez as vice-chairman, Adelanto City Councilman Daniel Ramos, Apple Valley Councilman Art Bishop, Barstow Councilwoman Carmen Hernandez, Big Bear Councilman Rick Herrick, Grand Terrace Mayor Bill Hussey, Hesperia Councilwoman Rebekah Swanson, Loma Linda Councilman Bhavin Jindal, Needles Mayor Janet Jernigan, Redlands Councilman Paul Barich, San Bernardino Mayor Helen Tran, Upland City Councilman Rudy Zuniga, Victorville Councilwoman Debra Jones, Yucaipa Councilman Bobby Duncan and county supervisors Paul Cook, Jesse Armendarez and Joe Baca, Jr.

Of those, Daniel Ramos in Adelanto, Bishop in Apple Valley, Hernandez in Barstow, Ulloa in Chino, Swanson in Hesperia, Robertson in Rialto, Klink in Twentynine Palms and Duncan in Yucaipa are set to stand for reelection in November, along with James Ramos seeking continuation as an Assemblyman and Aguilar is looking for another term in Congress.

Word has spread that as a courtesy to those ten politicians, who in the past have proven kind to the San Bernardino County Transportation Agency, the SBCTA management and staff, including SBCTA Executive Director Raymond Wolfe, have invented one delaying tactic after another to hold off on people learning that the construction projects on the freeway that they have been putting up with for three years and which they assumed were to add more lanes to the freeway to alleviate gridlock have yielded

toll lanes that they will not be at liberty to use without paying for.

In the past, general slow progress as well as material, equipment and manpower shortages brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic were blamed for the postponement of the toll lanes' opening from Summer 2022 until Spring 2023. Since then, another delay from Spring 2023 until September 2023 was attributed to the finalization of inspections and seismic certifications. The calendar eclipsed September 2023 and there was no opening. October, November, December, January and February followed, with no grand opening and no explanation.

It has now been stated that the reason for the holdup is that there were defects in the median barrier east of Archibald virtually the entire distance to Haven which were not caught until just a week or two prior to the scheduled opening last October. SBCTA officials swear that the concrete barrier between the eastbound and westbound toll lanes at that point met all of the safety and engineering criteria SBCTA applies to the improvements. It was emphasized that Wolfe has impeccable credentials that give him tremendous insight as to the suitability of design when it comes to highway construction.

Wolfe has a master's degree in in civil engineering from the California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, on the strength of which he qualified for licensing as a registered civil engineer, landing a job with the California Department of Transportation, known by its

acronym Caltrans, as a transportation engineer in 1991. In 1997, he began work on his doctorate in civil engineering at USC's Viterbi School of Engineering. In 1998, he was promoted to the position of senior bridge engineer, and in 2001 was entrusted with the assignment of opening a new bridge design office in Southern California as the region's supervising bridge engineer. In 2002, he was awarded his doctorate. Thereafter he managed the structure design implementation efforts related to accelerated bridge construction throughout Southern California. In 2008, Caltrans designated him as the director of its District 8 office, overseeing both San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

The work on the median stretching from Archibald to Haven passed muster with Wolfe, but some pesky inspectors with Caltrans said what was laid down wasn't good enough.

There was some consultation between SBCTA, Caltrans and the contractor on the toll project, a joint venture involving Lane Construction Corporation and Security Paving Company Incorporated. According to those familiar with the situation, Caltrans insisted on the de-erection of the barrier and its replacement with one that meets with state standards.

With any luck, the project will be completed by October, such that the toll lanes can be opened in the immediate aftermath of the election. In this way, commuters' anger, which is predicted to materialize in nearly universal terms once they realize that the four new lanes going

into place are not ones that are drivable for the average or typical user of freeway, should not have an impact on the election or the prospects of Ramos, Bishop, Hernandez, Ulloa, Swanson, Robertson Klink, Duncan, Ramos and Aguilar, or any other incumbents, remaining in office.

That the widening of the freeway from the San Bernardino County/Los Angeles County all the way into Rancho Cucamonga going on over the last four years is to accommodate not freeway lanes but toll lanes has been a secret hidden in plain sight. SBCTA did not go out of its way to publicize the coming toll road, but has not actively sought to hide it either. Rather that hide the project, it has pursued a strategy of obscuring it, using terms like "increased capacity," express, "enhanced capacity," hot or "augmented high occupancy vehicle." Only upon being pressed have SBCTA officials expounded on the concept, saying that the freeway at that point in both directions already has a single HOV (i.e. high occupancy vehicle) or carpool lane. That lane and another lane to be added in each direction will remain as a HOV or carpool lane, with the proviso that instead of carrying two passengers to qualify as a high occupancy vehicle, the car must carry three or more passengers. Those in cars with fewer than three passengers wishing to travel in the two inner lanes will have the option, transportation officials say, of purchasing, by means of a toll, the privilege of utilizing those lanes in the future.

-Mark Gutglueck

In Retirement, County's Elite Make Far More Money Through Their Pensions Than The Current Workforce Makes Through Employment *from page 11*

top annual salary as a county employee times the number of years worked times two-and-one-half percent or his or her top annual salary as a county employee times the number of years worked times two

percent. Thus, management and law enforcement employees, by working 33 years and 122 days, can obtain for themselves, every year for the rest of their lives, a pension equal to their highest rate of pay while

they were employed by the county, augmented by a 2 percent per year cost of living increase.

Many county employees who retired prior to 2013 engaged in so-called pension spiking. Prior to legislation passed in 2012 that banned the practice, a government employee in California could hold off on receiving his or

her leave time, vacation time, sick time and using cell phone, travel and computer allowances until the employee's final year of employment, allowing it to accrue and then cashing it in as an add-on to his or her salary to escalate the total earned compensation in the employee's last year of employment to boost his her pension.

At present San Bernardino County has 11,599 retired employees to whom it pays out \$555,519,608.71 in pensions annually. The average pension paid out to a former county employee who devoted his or her entire career to the county and is no longer working is \$97,240.76, which is roughly 310 percent of the county's median per

person income, \$31,348, the statistical average income of an employed resident of San Bernardino County employed in the private sector. The \$97,240.76 is also equal to 126 percent of the county's median household income, which generally represents the income of two or more people working within the private sector.