

## Dicus Confronted With Loyalty Vs. Competence Dilemma In His Promotional Priorities

Allegations have surfaced in three civil filings that are progressing toward trial that the senior command within the sheriff's department has become a den of both lesser qualified, in some cases dishonest and in others criminally negligent officers who have promoted on the basis of their loyalty to Sheriff Shannon Dicus rather than innate competence or acquired skill levels.

As significantly, it is

alleged, Dicus and other high-ranking members of the department have actively networked to prevent members of the department or its augmentation teams who have direct knowledge about the improprieties or malfeasance of his professional associates from advancing up the chain of command or to remove them from the department altogether.

Of note is that this latest round of criticism

aimed at Dicus and the sheriff's department originates not with individuals who have been arrested by the department but rather with a sergeant, two lieutenants and a former federal judge who was a longtime volunteer with its search and rescue division.

Shannon Dicus is the current and sixth of Frank Bland's successors as San Bernardino County sheriff and the

political machine Bland created.

To become sheriff in 1954, Bland, who was then the police chief of Needles, had to wage a dynamic political battle to unseat his predecessor, Eugene Mueller, who had been sheriff for a single four-year term. Mueller, likewise, in 1950 had ousted the previous sheriff, Jim Stocker, who had been in office a mere four years after defeating Emmet Shay

in 1946. Despite having climbed to the top of the law enforcement heap in San Bernardino County by virtue of willingly entering the political fray and getting elected, Bland thought of himself as a lawman first, and in forming his conception of himself being a politician came in a very distant second place. Upholding the law, Bland felt, and having to head out on the hustings to beg voters for votes for

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## Upland Restores Mobile Home Rent Control Ordinance Sans Protection For New Coach Purchasers

A year after the Upland City Council in a calculated and secretive move, eradicated the their city's mobile home rent stabilization ordinance that had been in place for more than two-and-a-half decades, its members Monday night voted 3-to-2 to reestablish an altered version of the measure that will leave most future such tenants vulnerable to exorbitant price escalations and make it difficult for current residents to sell their coaches.

While many or indeed most of the city's 2,223 mobile home residents and their family members were heartened by the city council's action this week in stemming what had been the opportunity for mobile home park owners to engage in a year of unbridled lease increases, a cross section of the city's population who had benefited by the previous ordinance and are now subject to the disadvantage the re-drafted passages of the ordinance to be put in place as a consequence of Monday night's action sophisticated enough to understand the significance of the cards they have now been dealt as a result of the city's sleight-of-hand are more convinced than ever that there was and continues some order of collusion involving the mayor, at least one and perhaps two of the city council members, city management, the city attorney, the city's development services division and the city clerk with a

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## Gang Snagging Cargo From RR Cars As Train Slows At Bend Near Devore Interrupted

The chance spotting of an operation by a sophisticated gang of domestic and international thieves specializing in the theft of cargo from freight trains resulted in three of a team consisting of some dozen-and-a-quarter thieves being taken into custody in Devore on May 5.

Around 11 a.m. on Tuesday May 5 the San

Bernardino County Sheriff's Department received a call reporting that roughly 15 people had been observed riding on a Burlington Northern Santa Fe cargo train on the tracks near Glen Helen Parkway and Cajon Boulevard.

It is not known whether the report was from a citizen who by chance spotted what appeared to

be an anomaly or whether an individual hired by one of the railroad companies to keep a watch on the trains transiting that stretch of the rail line descending into San Bernardino Valley from the High Desert phoned the warning in.

Over the last eight to ten months, an intensified crackdown on railroad cargo theft has been

pursued by a multitude of agencies and entities, including the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad Police as well as the FBI and Department of Homeland Security.

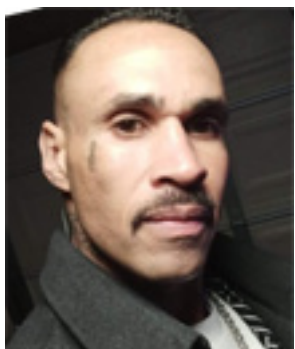
According to the Association of American Railroads, "In recent years, organized crimi-

nal groups have increasingly targeted the nation's railroads using sophisticated tactics and technology to commit cargo theft."

In Southern California in particular, investigators have learned that the perpetrators have previously succeeded because they had inside information about railroad company

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## Dispute Over Undisclosed Issue Let To Violence-Prone Brother Killing Older Brother In Hesperia Monday



Adrian Wrice

Sheriff's Department homicide detectives have

come to the conclusion that an argument between two brothers nearly a generation apart in age resulted in fratricide Monday night in Hesperia.

While others in the 9200 block of Second Avenue in the City of Progress were experiencing a relatively quiet evening on the night of May 11 an argument be-



Talib Venegas

tween Talib Elisha Venegas, 30, and

## Victorville Solons Enthusiastic About NewMark Merrill Pact For Desert Sky Plaza II

Victorville city officials, including Mayor Liz Becerra, Councilman Robert Harriman, Councilwoman Tiffany Gaudin, Councilwoman Leslie Irving and Councilwoman Corrine Mora and City Manager Keith Metzler are beside themselves with pride over the entitlement they have granted to NewMark Merrill Companies, Inc.,

World Premier Investments and R.Y. Properties, Inc. to develop Desert Sky Plaza II.

Desert Sky Plaza II is intended to be the most impressive component within The Desert Plazas, an ongoing and evolving 100-acre commercial development, which already has Winco and Home Depot as anchors and will include

over 800,000 square feet of retail when fully completed. The Desert Sky portion of the project is to be a 30-acre 297,363-square-foot shopping center at the southeast corner of Roy Rogers Drive and Amargosa Road.

Groundbreaking on the project is imminent. The opening is scheduled, tentatively, for fall

2027, in time for the 2027 Christmas shopping season.

Calabasis-based NewMark Merrill Companies owns and operates 76 shopping centers or Malls around the country in four states, including the Agoura Meadows in Agoura Hills, the Alicia Town Center in Laguna Hills, the Anaheim Town Square in Anaheim, Ar-

lington Square in Riverside, Beach Talbert Village in Huntington Beach, Bel Villagio in Temecula, Bristol Warner Marketplace in Santa Ana, Carriage Square in Oxnard, Crenshaw Imperial Village in Crenshaw, Triangle Center in Longview, Washington, Pulaski Promenade in Chicago, Marketplace at Six Corners

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## Frank Bland, San Bernardino County's Sheriff from 1955 to 1983, Was The Most Powerful Political Entity In The Jurisdiction & He Created A Political Machine Which Holds Sway To The Present *from front page*

himself was a duty that he considered to be below the dignity of the office of sheriff. Accordingly, with the dawn of 1955 and the start of his maiden term as sheriff, he immediately embarked on the first three of his four primary goals, consisting of living up to his campaign commitments of interrupting the county's flourishing vice activity by shutting down brothels, gambling houses and pinball parlors where teenagers were spending, by his estimation, too much time instead of doing their homework. He took a more gradual approach with his fourth key goal, which entailed constructing around him, using not only members of the department but those who were the driving forces and power brokers in the various communities around the far flung 20,105-square mile county. Already Needles' favorite son, he befriended business leaders, agricultural interests and elected officials in the cities of San Bernardino, Redlands, Ontario, Upland, Colton, Barstow, Rialto, Chino, Montclair and Fontana as well as the communities of Victorville, Lake Arrowhead, Alta Loma, Cucamonga, San Antonio Heights, Big Bear and Apple Valley. He convinced the movers and shakers in all those places that he represented both the stability and sensible order they needed to succeed, inducing them to close ranks, one and all, behind him. They pledged, when the time came, to assist in defraying the expense of any campaign he needed to wage to remain as their sheriff. This served in warding off any others who contemplated running against him in 1958. He was then at liberty to disburse from his political war chest, as much of the money that was left over to any other elected officehold-

ers or hopefuls around the county he deemed worthy of holding office. This served to both broaden and deepen his support network. Again and again, as in 1958, no opponents against him emerged in 1962, 1966, 1970 and 1974. That lack of challenge and unbroken control of the sheriff's office bred both excess and a degree of corruption including accusations that Bland had become enmeshed in the protection of the region's prostitution trade and diversions of money entrusted to the department for vice and narcotics operations to his own personal use, which led, in 1978, to three candidates challenging him. For the first time, the Bland political machine was put to the test, at which point its true strength was demonstrated. The campaign celebrating Bland as the quintessential lawman dedicated to forthrightly collaring criminals and serving justice overwhelmed press revelations about his reversal from his reformist approach in 1954 to an authority who had become associated with at least some of those he was supposed to be apprehending and the claims of his opponents that he was no longer a righteous upholder of the law. Bland was elected to his seventh four-year term as sheriff, easily outdistancing the other three candidates with 99,820 votes to their combined 84,391.

In 1982, further scandal, such as revelations about impounded vehicles and stolen items recovered by the department being diverted into the possession of department members or ones relating to the use of the red card file to angle for control over politicians and judges, was about to break into the open. One of Bland's own people, Charles Callahan, a captain with the department, sensed blood in

the water and declared his candidacy. The then-69-year-old and increasingly alcoholic Bland opted to retire, looking first to pass the torch to Floyd Jones, a one-time California Highway Patrol commander who had jumped mid-career to the sheriff's department to accede to the second-in-command position of undersheriff. Jones, however, had a heart condition that made making him sheriff inadvisable. Bland was determined to keep the department, its reputation and its hundreds of thousands of files that included reports of calls for service, notational references to what and whom his deputies had encountered in the field, incident reports raw investigative data notes and/or transcriptions of interviews and interrogations of victims, witnesses, subjects and suspects, as well as investigation reports, documentation and assessments of evidence, physical and otherwise, under the control of someone who would hold him and all he had done during his illustrious law enforcement career in high regard and would respect his legacy. Bland's second choice for his successor was another member of the department's command echelon, Floyd Tidwell, who had been with the department since the 1950s and in the 1960s had served as the department's inspector. Tidwell's work as inspector, in which post he was provided with multiple intimate glimpses of local governmental operations at various spots around the county, was followed by stints as a sheriff's captain in multiple postings around the county and later as a deputy chief and finally as the assistant sheriff working out of the sheriff's headquarters in downtown San Bernardino. In the last two positions, he oversaw the detectives in the intelligence division and attached to the sheriff's command. Tidwell, Bland knew, understood not just how the department functioned but possessed a gravitas and

reverence for the sacred mission of protecting the good people of the largest county geographically in the United States from the sociopaths who were preying upon them. He anointed Tidwell with the confidence that the department he had remade in his image would remain intact.

With Bland's endorsement, and the assistance of his political machine, Tidwell trounced Callahan.

A tradition was thereby established. The incumbent sheriff – at that moment in time the inheritor of the Bland Political Machine – designates his successor. As had been the case with Bland choosing Tidwell in 1982, Tidwell tapped his undersheriff, Dick Williams, to succeed him in 1990. In 1994, Williams passed the mantle along to Undersheriff Gary Penrod. In 2009, while Penrod was yet sheriff after having been reelected thrice, the succession arrangement was given another twist. With between one and two years remaining on his term, Penrod arranged to resign as sheriff, designating Rod Hoops as his chosen successor. While Penrod did not have the authority to determine or appoint his successor, Bland had a generation previously transformed the sheriff into the most powerful political position in the county. It was up to the board of supervisors to determine who would replace any of the county elected officials who held a countywide position – sheriff, district attorney, assessor/county clerk or treasurer/auditor – by appointment. In 2009, the sitting sheriff announced his intention to leave office early and called for the board of supervisors to appoint his assistant sheriff to replace him, effectively handing the political machine created by Bland and which had been passed to Tidwell, then Williams and then him to Hoops, the members of the board of supervisors, all of whom were political animals themselves who might be severely

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damaged in their next electoral or re-electoral effort by the opposition of the latest incarnation Bland Political Machine – merely saluted and appointed Hoops. The following year, Hoops, running in the 2010 race for sheriff as an incumbent and with the backing of the sheriff's political machine, won the race going away, with 67 percent of the vote against two challengers. A little more than two years into his first elected term and with roughly two years remaining on that term, Hoops resigned, recommending Assistant Sheriff John McMahon as his replacement. Without asking for applicants or considering anyone other than McMahon, the board of supervisors designated him as sheriff. Two years later, in the June 2014 election corresponding with that year's gubernatorial primary election, McMahon, as the incumbent and supported by the successor to the Bland Political Machine, proved victorious with 63 percent of the vote against two challengers. Four years later, in the 2018 election for San Bernardino County sheriff, no one came forward to run against McMahon, just as any potential challengers had shrunk from running against Bland in from 1958 until 1974.

In 2021, McMahon opted to retire with a year-and-a-half of the term he had been elected to in yet remaining, recommending that the county board of supervisors choose his undersheriff, Shannon Dicus,

as his replacement. The board complied, making Dicus San Bernardino County's 36th sheriff.

Since 2021 Dicus has bestrode San Bernardino County like a colossus.

Just as McMahon, Hoops, Penrod, Williams, Tidwell and Bland before him, Dicus, while required to stay within the parameters and guidelines set by the California Commission on Peace Officers Standards and Training, otherwise has virtual autonomy over his department, enjoying, or at least seeming to enjoy, complete discretion in how the department is run, who is running it, who is promoted, who is kept in place, who is demoted, who is relieved of duty and even the timing of retirements.

Despite what many criminals incarcerated in the California prison system or San Bernardino County's jails and a few of their attorneys maintain, Shannon Dicus has a strong belief in his own rectitude and that the organization he heads is involved in a noble cause - enforcing the law, keeping the peace, collaring the crooked, upholding justice and protecting the community. In his view, he and the department are doing a good job fulfilling that mission. By virtue of having advanced up the chain of command in the sheriff's department, the board of supervisors having appointed him sheriff and the voters of San Bernardino County having overwhelmingly voted to keep him in

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## Victorville Making Major Commercial Stride With Second Phase Of First The Desert Plazas *from front page*

in Chicago, Northfield Commons in Denver, Visalia Center in Visalia, Tri-City Crossroads in Oceanside, Villa La Jolla Plaza in La Jolla and the 20th & K Shopping Center in Lancaster.

The Desert Sky Plaza

II is designed by Architects Orange and Kimley Horn. It is to be anchored by Target, Burlington, and several other soft goods retailers. The project is projected to generate over 6.5 million annual visits upon

opening, a perhaps optimistic assumption, given the 139,000 population of Victorville. Desert Sky Plaza is now more than 70 percent pre-committed, though Greg Giacopuzzi and Darren Bovard of NewMark Merrill, who are supervising leasing at the center, yet have availability for tenants to include junior anchor, drive-thru,

carwash, pad, and retail shop spaces ranging from 1,500 square feet to 25,000 square feet.

The city worked with the members of the NewMark Merrill team, including Sandy Sigal, chairman and chief operating officer; Susan Rorison, chief operating officer; Sandra Kist, chief financial officer; Luca Giovanardi, chief

development officer; Jim Patton, senior vice president of leasing & acquisitions; Brad Pearl, executive vice president; Greg Giacopuzzi, vice president for leasing and development; and Elaine Weiss, senior project manager for construction & development.

“This is the culmination of our partnership with the City of Victor-

ville,” said Sigal. We are committed to the High Desert and are excited to bring much needed retail, restaurants, and services to this region as it continues to grow through development, investment, and property management.”



## Administrative Law Judge To Delay Until May 22 Decisions On Possible Teacher Layoffs In RUSD *from front page*

further instructed the district’s top administrators to orchestrate the layoffs in such a way that the support staff drawdown is distributed evenly throughout the district’s 25 traditional schools. This in practical terms means moving roughly 20 other support staff members from one school to another.

Under California law, school districts must issue potential layoff notices to public school

workers by March 15 if they could be laid off by the end of the school year and must deliver notice of final layoff decisions no later than May 15.

Cabral was tight-lipped about the reductions, and sought to show no emotion about what had been done.

In addition to the potential layoff warnings sent to support personnel in January, the district issued 91 layoff notices to certificated positions,

including 37 teachers, nine elementary and middle school assistant principals, three school nurses, one special services coordinator, one district athletics and student support coordinator, eight academic case carrier counselors, eight elementary school counselors, six secondary school counselors, four librarians, four program specialists and ten adult school teachers and counselors.

The board on Tuesday night did not make good on laying off any of the certificated personnel.

The elapsing of the deadline today, May 15, however, does not mean no certificated personnel will be let go this year. Certificated employees, as opposed to support personnel, under the state education code have the ability to challenge the March 15 preliminary layoff notices and also have “bumping rights,” meaning they can request to take the position of a teacher with less seniority who is not being laid off. Exercising bumping rights or making challenges are up to the discretion of individ-

ual teachers.

Reversal of layoffs by challenge are not automatic, and a final decision is subject to the decision of an administrative law judge who considers each challenge on its individual merits.

While it is not known how many of the 91 certificated positions targeted for possible elimination, if any, the district intends to actuate, a good number of those certificated personnel exercised their option to make a challenge, each of which thereby involved a hearing be-

fore the administrative law judge assigned to Redlands Unified. That judge has requested and was granted an extension to May 22 by which to finalize his decisions. The school board must finalize its firing list within five days of the administrative law judge’s final ruling. It is thus anticipated that the school board will publicly announce whether any teachers, principals or other certificated employees will depart at the end of the current 2025-26 school year by May 27.

## Ring Members Observed And Some Caught Seeking To Steal Cargo From Passing Train In Devore *from front page*

operations.

Railroad industry sources and law enforcement professionals report that a substantial amount of railroad cargo theft takes place as a consequence so-called “inside jobs,” that is, with the assistance of those who work with the railroads themselves or as part of the rail infrastructure and support network. Individual linked to cargo theft rings who have spe-

cific knowledge of the placing and timing of the shipment by rail of high-value goods is a common vulnerability and a major factor in the success of criminals who target rail cars for theft. Railroad police, the sheriff’s department, the San Bernardino Police Department, the Colton Police Department, the Rialto Police Department and the FBI have information that organized crime

is employing individuals who assume relatively low-ranking and even temporary positions with rail companies or at rail terminals and rail yards to obtain information about what goods are being transported on which trains and in specific rail cars, together with information about when and where the trains are to remain stationary for an extended period.

Another vulnerability consists of spots where moving trains must slow considerably at curves or bends in the rail line, as is the case at the bottom

of the slope descending from the Cajon Pass near Devore. At that location, those on foot determined to jump on to passing train can do so, albeit with a certain degree of difficulty and some danger. Once on the trains, the thieves can break locks and seals on individual cars to gain entry to them and liberate their contents.

The highgraded investigations have revealed a substantial international component among the perpetrators, and occasionally evidence that those involved in the

rings have immediate or removed family members who have found work with the railroad companies, rail terminals or rail yards.

As a consequence of some of the known thieves being foreign citizens, many of them in the country illegally, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security and its subdivision, the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, have become involved.

According to the San Bernardino County Sheriff’s Department,

“The [May 5, 2026] incident location is a high crime area for train cargo theft.”

The deputies who had been dispatched to that location arrived after the thieves had jumped from the train at a spot where it is still obliged to move at a slower speed but before they had left the area. Moments later a vehicle moving at a high rate of speed drove past them. Two deputies in separate vehicles took off after those fleeing. The driver took evasive action and initially re-

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## Older Brother With A Criminal Past Working On Going Straight Shot & Killed By His Equally Wayward Younger Brother *from front page*

his 50-year-old brother, Adrian Clay Wrice broke out. The contretemps between the two was punctuated by a gunshot at around 10:45 p.m.

A 9-1-1 call was made and when arriving sheriff’s deputies reached the location, they were directed to the 9269 address when they found Wrice suffering from a

gunshot wound.

“Deputies immediately initiated lifesaving measures until medical personnel arrived, according to a sheriff’s department statement. “Wrice was airlifted to Arrowhead Regional Medical Center where he was pronounced deceased. Hesperia deputies conducted an initial

investigation and identified the suspect as Talib Elisha Venegas, the brother of Wrice. Venegas fled the scene prior to the deputies’ arrival.”

Detectives with the sheriff’s department’s specialized investigation division’s homicide detail dispatched to the scene reached a preliminary determination that confirmed the deputies findings and an arrest warrant for Venegas was obtained

In the immediate aftermath of the incident, however, the department

played what information it had close to the vest. Sheriff’s department spokeswoman Jenny Smith, without naming Venegas and without mentioning the use of a firearm, in an application of understatement, said “During an argument between the suspect and victim, the victim sustained a major injury.”

Smith described the victim as a man but was less specific about the suspect, leaving the impression that the department might be seeking a woman as the perpetra-

tor.

Venegas was taken into custody about 10:40 a.m. Tuesday when he returned to 9269 2nd Avenue. He was booked on suspicion of murder, along with violating the terms of felony probation stemming from a prior conviction.

He is being held without bail pending a future bail hearing.

Both brothers had criminal records and neither was unacquainted with firearms.

Adrian Wrice has a criminal history dating

back more than 25 years, which included felony convictions while he was living in Los Angeles County at 4621 Gleason Street in Los Angeles and another location in Venice. Wrice removed himself from Los Angeles County to San Bernardino County some 12 years ago, at which time he attempted to make a go of it with his trucking company, known as ACW Logistics. Over the last ten years, he was arrested on October 16, 2016 for being a felon *Continued on Page 17*

## Lieutenant Dupper, Who Closely Identified With And Admired Dicus Before & After He Was Sheriff, Sought To Keep His Friend Apprised Of The Problematic Issues At Large Within The Department *from page 2*

place, Dicus believes he is justified in holding onto the power he commands. Having now risen to the top of a very powerful organization, Dicus has structured who mans the organization he commands in large measure on loyalty to himself and his vision for what his organization should be.

Indeed, just as was the case during the department's Bland era, under Dicus, those members of the department who evince a can-do attitude with regard to the department's enforcement priorities, acquiesce in the command's personnel promotional decisions in which Dicus's friends and personal associates are favored with high-rank, accept without question or protest the command echelon's authority and conform with the expectation that they support the sheriff and his allies politically are the most likely to advance professionally.

Consequently, a key trait in those Dicus permits to function within the command are those who recognize his organizational goals and then get along with the program, become members of the team and demonstrate no differences or criticism of their colleagues within their colleagues within the department's management suite.

One of the first manifestations of Dicus's adherence to the principle of holding himself and his command staff to be beyond reproach consisted of the experience of Sergeant Randall Hansen. In 2021, during the last several months of John McMahon's tenure as sheriff, Hansen promoted to lieutenant. After Dicus advanced to the sheriff's position, Hansen made a hostile work environment complaint, the details for which made their way into documentation that

reached Dicus's desk. By 2023, Hansen was busted back to sergeant's rank. While promotions among the department's more than 2,000 personnel are often slow in coming, only in the rarest of circumstances are they reversed.

Hansen's experience is a cautionary tale, one not unlike what happened to Michael Gilley. As was the case with Hansen, Gilley was a sergeant, and in 2020, while working in the department's main jail, the West Valley Detention Center, he was present during a briefing at which approaching 20 department personnel, both sworn and unsworn, were present. The discussion at one point grew heated and the commander at the jail, Captain Victor Moreno, seized Gilley's handheld radio and threw it in anger at Lieutenant Jesse Venegas, damaging the device. At that time, Dicus was the undersheriff. Several members of the department filed complaints regarding what was characterized as Moreno's unprofessional behavior and the tension and hostile working environment it was creating. Moreno was closely affiliated and aligned with Dicus, and would emerge in 2022 as one of the members of the department most active in fundraising on behalf of Dicus's election campaign. Upon Dicus's elevation to sheriff, Moreno was widely perceived as the second most likely candidate for elevation to a deputy chief's post. Dicus considered the complaints regarding Moreno lodged by the employees at the West Valley Detention Center to be an unacceptable breach of teamwork, in which the department's officers were expected to comply with orders handed down from above them and essentially ignore the manifestations

of a superior officer's idiosyncrasies. In the same timeframe during which Dicus became sheriff, Gilley departed from department.

The experience of Lieutenant Phill Dupper perhaps offers the most illustrative depiction of Dicus's disdain for criticism – be it constructive or malicious – of the institution he heads and the personnel he has chosen to manage it.

In 1996, Dupper joined the sheriff's department, five years after Dicus was hired. By virtue of their age difference and Dicus's five-year head start in joining the department, Dupper was junior in rank to Dicus throughout their overlapping tenure with the department. Nevertheless, Dicus and Dupper grew acquainted with one another shortly after Dupper began as a deputy and grew close, given that both were on a relatively fast track of advancement and were of like mind with regard to their high regard for the department and its work. They established a routine of meeting for breakfast once or twice a month. Dupper grew accustomed to communicating to Dicus, and Dicus appeared to appreciate hearing, his concerns about issues that cropped up which he believed represented problems or challenges ongoing issues that should be redressed before they became problematic.

In January 2017, Dupper was promoted to lieutenant and assigned to the department's information services division, which includes the central records, information technology and dispatch units. In 2018, Dicus was selected as undersheriff by then-sheriff McMahon. Also in 2018, Sarkis Ohanessian was promoted to captain and assigned to oversee the information services division, thereby becoming Dupper's direct supervisor. Early on in his interaction with Ohanessian, Dupper became concerned about what he perceived as Ohanessian cutting corners and engag-

ing in activities Dupper considered improper or unethical. Dupper challenged Ohanessian directly with regard to some of his actions and then went directly to Undersheriff Shannon Dicus to express his concerns.

One such issue was a deal in late 2018 that Ohanessian was attempting to orchestrate with AT&T to replace Verizon as the provider of the mobile data computers used by sheriff's deputies throughout the county. Dupper and his information technology staff pushed back on the AT&T deal directly to Ohanessian and higher executives, believing, and stating, the only reason the deal was entertained was due to AT&T's donations in support of the annual San Bernardino County Sheriff's Rodeo event.

On September 9, 2019, Ohanessian made a presentation to the command, echelon, suggesting the department adopt Motorola Vault as the department's digital evidence storage and retrieval system. The executives signed off on it without having been informed or understanding that a formal bidding process had not been utilized to arrive at that conclusion. Ohanessian took his approval to the county's bureau of administration where it was reviewed by the county purchasing division. The purchase was disallowed on the grounds that the vendor and the product in question had not been subject to a competitive bid. Undeterred, Ohanessian, yet determined to award the contract to Motorola, formed what was essentially a fraudulent committee consisting of the department's information technology employees to "evaluate" the responses to a request for proposals, instructing the committee members to select and recommend Motorola Vault, thereby bypassing or, indeed, violating the terms of the bid process the county utilizes in selecting vendors. When Dupper spoke up about this situation, Ohanes-

sian left him off the bid evaluation committee.

Dupper had further confrontations with Ohanessian regarding the department's contacts, interactions and arrangements with other vendors and potential vendors, in particular ones that skirted county policy, state regulations and/or sound practice. In June 2020, Ohanessian forwarded an email to Dupper with a link to sheriff's department data and a product originating with the company, Agiline. Dupper responded and said although what was being offered or proposed appeared interesting, he did not recall doing anything to authorize the company to examine department data nor did he know of any official contract with them. Dupper referenced state Criminal Justice Information Services requirements that would normally be in effect during the contractual process, intimating that Ohanessian allowed a non-backgrounded, non-approved information technology vendor into the information technology unit and provided it with access data to prepare statistics. Captain Ohanessian acknowledged in an email response that he had made a mistake.

In early June 2020, complaints were made in the records division about Deputy Chief Horace Boatwright continually being present in a female records employee's office, during which time the door remained closed for extended periods. Records manager Sarah Garcez, who received the complaints from her employees and witnessed the activity herself, took the matter up with Dupper, who reported the complaints to Ohanessian, who said he spoke to Assistant Sheriff Lana Tomlin, Boatwright's supervisor. According to Ohanessian, Tomlin told Boatwright to stay out of the records division, as his line of responsibility within the department did not extend there. Boatwright later promoted to undersheriff upon Dicus becoming sheriff, in which posi-

tion he was, along with Dicus, responsible for overseeing promotions and transfers for the entire department.

In July 2020, Ohanessian informed Dupper the department had fallen far behind in the required reporting of statistics to the California Department of Justice. Dupper had been having challenges with the records division employee, the employee who had been involved with Boatwright, in the production of those statistics. The employee, since the issue of her extended and improper workplace meetings with Boatwright had been broached, had been increasingly challenging for Dupper, Garcez and many others in the information services division, including Ohanessian, to manage. Shortly thereafter, Dupper met with the department's so-called "Inform Transition Team," a group of deputies and a sheriff's training specialist in this case relating to records keep, as to why the Department of Justice reporting was being delayed. The team told him they believed the statistics reporting was being intentionally delayed by the employee in question. Dupper emailed that information to Ohanessian, who responded by telling Dupper to treat everything with "white gloves," conveying all involved needed to watch out because of the relationship between that employee and Boatwright.

During the summer of 2020, Dupper shared with Dicus his frustration with Ohanessian not disclosing everything to executives related to activity in information services division and the determination by the Inform team with regard to a newly-acquired records management system that had come on line the previous year in which difficulties with the software had manifested along with conflicts involving the information systems own requirements and internal processes, exacerbated by employee performance issues. The

## Engaged In A Complete And Radical Undoing Of The Mobile Home Rent Control Provision In The Upland City Code, The City Council Hid What It Was Doing From The Public *from front page*

handful of the city's mobile home park owners.

Artifacts that remain from the city's action taken last year demonstrate that city officials at the senior level of management sought to hide the erasure of the rental protections that had been put into the Upland City Code some time prior to the Turn of the Millennium, and had carried it out with the connivance of City Clerk Carrie Johnson, who had to have been cognizant of the implication of the action, as was the city council, which considered the matter as a stand-alone item at its last May 2025 meeting and in a follow-on "second-reading" of the ordinance at its first June 2025 meeting.

The complete and radical undoing of the mobile home rent stabilization measure was deliberately hidden in a single legislative bundle, such that it was easily overlooked by the public at large and those most directly impacted by it. The public record shows that the agenda for the May 27, 2025 Upland City Council meeting listed as item number 13 a "business item" consisting of the "consideration of an omnibus ordinance amending various sections of the Upland Municipal Code." Upland City Council meetings are normally held on the second and fourth Monday night of the month. In this case, the meeting was held on Tuesday evening, because of that week's conflict with the three-day Memorial Day Weekend.

Nowhere in the agenda for the May 27, 2025 meeting is there a description of what those "various sections" of the city code consist of. Nevertheless, technically and legalistically, the city was in compliance with the requirement contained in the Ralph M. Brown Act that it

make public disclosure of the action ahead of the vote. The Brown Act, California's open public meeting law, requires that an agenda providing a bare-bones description of what is to be discussed and/or voted upon by a local legislative body be posted at least 72 hours in advance.

At the May 27, 2025 meeting, the discussion with regard to the omnibus ordinance was extremely abbreviated. Though the item was up for discussion during what was considered to be a public hearing, no members of the public offered a comment on the proposed changes. The council considered the item on the basis of the ordinance's title only and waived the necessity of having to read the full contents of the ordinance, which further obscured what was occurring, noting only that Ordinance No. 1997 "amending various sections of the Upland Municipal Code as specified" and was being given the first of two approvals by the council, pursuant to a vote.

Under the California Government Code, local governmental entities, such as cities or counties need to pass an ordinance with a majority vote of the government in question's elected authorizing panel – the city council or board of supervisors – in a "first reading" at an open public meeting followed by an approving vote of the majority of panel members in a "second" reading at another meeting, such that the ordinance goes into effect 30 days following the second vote.

At the May 27, 2025 meeting, on a motion by Councilman James Breitling that was seconded by Councilman Rudy Zuniga, the item making the blanket changes to the Upland Municipal Code was passed unanimously.

The matter was then

scheduled for a second reading, i.e., consideration and vote, at the city council's June 9, 2025 meeting. In this way, it was the vote to take place at the June 9 meeting that provided the final determination as to whether the omnibus ordinance would go into effect.

The City of Upland in this case, through the personage of clerk Keri Johnson, had arranged, at a cost of \$522.87, for the largest circulation daily newspaper in Upland, the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin, to publish on June 3, 2025 a legal notice of the pending finalization of the adoption of the ordinance, containing a summary of the omnibus ordinance.

With the all-capital-letter caption of "Notice Of Proposed Adoption of Ordinance No. 1997," the legal advertisement stated, "Please Take Notice that on June 9, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, Upland City Hall, 460 North Euclid Avenue, Upland, California, the City Council of the City of Upland shall consider the adoption of Ordinance No. 1997, entitled 'An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Upland amending various sections of the Upland Municipal Code as specified.' The aforementioned ordinance was introduced for first reading on May 27, 2025 by the City Council."

A summary of the omnibus ordinance followed, stating the city council's anticipated action would "amend and update various sections of the Upland Municipal Code as part of the City of Upland's annual review" of its codes.

"First," the summary stated, "the ordinance would amend Section 2.12.010 to remove the requirement that the city manager's appointment of the director of finance must be approved by the city council. Second, the ordinance would update Section 2.14.020(C) to permit the city clerk's designee to issue confirmation of receipt of campaign disclosure statements required by

the Political Reform Act. Third, the ordinance would amend Section 2.48.090 to provide that notices inviting bids under the city's formal bid procedure shall be posted on the city's website instead of in a newspaper of general circulation, and to remove the requirement that the city solicit bids from a bidder's list. Fourth, the ordinance would update Section 2.56.060(C) to increase the city's gift limit under its conflict of interest regulations from \$420.00 to \$630.00. Fifth, the ordinance would amend multiple sections of Chapter 3.32, "Claims Against City." The ordinance would replace Sections 3.32.020, 3.32.030 and 3.32.040 regarding facsimile signatures of warrants, payroll checks, and submitting certified manual signatures. Additionally, the ordinance would replace Section 3.32.050, regarding operation of the city's check signing machine, in its entirety. Sixth, the Ordinance would delete Chapter 5.68, "Mobilehome Rent Review" in its entirety. Finally, the Ordinance would remove Section 13.12.050(G) (2), defining eligibility criteria for discounted water charges under the city's water service regulations."

Of note, is that the summary was generally more forthcoming with respect to the nature of the other elements of the city code being altered than with respect to the mobile home rent increase limitations, which was made in the most cursory and indirect manner.

At the June 9 meeting, the discussion of and vote on the omnibus ordinance was not allotted a separate public hearing but rather placed on the meeting's consent calendar along with 16 other items. The consent calendar is normally reserved for items that are considered routine and noncontroversial, and which are grouped together to be collectively voted upon with a single vote. On a motion by Councilman Breitling

seconded by Councilman Zuniga, the consent calendar was unanimously approved by the mayor and council.

Subsequent to the June 9 meeting, on June 16, at cost to the city of \$537.14, the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin ran a notice of the adoption of Ordinance No. 1997, which again contained a summary of the ordinance's contents, essentially identical to that contained in the previously published notice.

The appearances of the May 27 and June 9 agendas, the action at the meetings and the legal notices garnered no citizen/resident attention.

The original Upland Mobile Home Rent Stabilization Ordinance capped annual space rent increases at \$34 per month or 7 percent, whichever was greater, specifically upon the sale/transfer of the mobile home. In terms of general year-to-year increases, the historic city code limited the maximum annual lease space increase to 3 percent. With the second vote on approving the omnibus ordinance on June 9, 2025, those limits were eliminated as of July 9, 2025.

The matter remained pretty much unremarked until February of this year, when the landlords at three of the city's five mobile home parks informed their tenants they were going to increase their lease payments by 5 percent. There were reports that the other two mobile home parks were on the verge of or had already given indication they were to seek lease increases of 10 percent. In reaction to some immediate protests to the 5 percent increase, the representative of a corporation that owns one of the city's mobile home parks said tenants should gird themselves for a 10 percent increase next year.

The Sentinel was given information in April indicating that the ownership/management of the mobile home parks remained silent over the first eight to nine months of the mobile home rent stabilization ordinance

being deleted from the Upland Municipal Code as a favor or benefit to the mayor and four members of the city council, who wanted to keep their constituents in the dark about what they had done for as long as they could for strategic reason, perhaps related to this year's upcoming election in which Second District Councilman James Breitling, Third District Councilman Carlos Garcia and Fourth District Councilman Rudy Zuniga are due to stand for reelection. The owners of the mobile home parks, collectively and singly in most cases, sincerely believed that the eradication of the Mobilehome Rent Review/Mobile Home Rent Control Ordinance was a positive development that was long past due.

From the perspective of apartment complex owners, single family rental unit owners and mobile home owners, rent control is questionable from a constitutional standpoint in that, conceptually, it can be construed as a violation of the Fifth Amendment's "takings clause" or the Fourteenth Amendment "due process" requirement and deprives landlords of their property rights through limiting the value of their land or the use thereof. In addition, there is a case to be made that rent increase limitations can deprive those who own that property of just compensation. Nevertheless, the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently upheld rent control as a valid exercise of state and local government "police powers" to protect the public welfare, adjudging that putting a ceiling on what a property owner can charge to utilize living quarters does not qualify as an unconstitutional forced "taking" of property under either the Fifth and Fourteenth amendments.

In private and in some cases publicly the owners of mobile home parks in Upland have not been hesitant to assert that the expense of owning, operating and maintain-

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## Dicus Did Not Appreciate Dupper's Conscientiousness, Seeing The Junior Officer's Focus On The Department's Flaws As Antithetical To The Spirit Of Teamwork & Cohesiveness Necessary For Operational Continuity In A Large Law Enforcement Agency *from page 4*

Inform Transition Team had been told by Ohanessian to not share the problems found with departmental higher-ups because, he told Dicus, Ohanessian did not want "bad" news getting to the executives, including both of the department's then-assistant sheriffs, Lana Tomlin and Steve Higgins. As a result, the situation relating to the records management system was growing chaotic, Dupper told Dicus.

In early June 2020, several dispatch division supervisors approached Captain Ohanessian alleging a hostile work environment created by dispatch division administrator Kim Turner. Ohanessian tasked Dupper to assist him in interviewing several dispatch supervisors and the two dispatch managers answerable to Turner. At the conclusion of the interviews, Ohanessian directed Dupper to summarize the findings, which Dupper did in an email that noted elements of concern with Turner's behavior, which were creating a liability. Several supervisors mentioned demeaning and hostile comments, stress Turner had generated, time taken off by other employees because of her, favoritism and other specific failures in leadership. Ohanessian acknowledged Dupper's email was "on point" and said he forwarded the information up the chain of command. Despite Dupper's efforts, he later reported, the issues relating to Turner's disruptions in the dispatch division persisted. Rumors emerged that the matter was being "swept under the rug" because Turner assisted Dicus in writing his master's thesis. A few years later, after Dupper was no longer in the information services division and neither the past nor

more recently emerging complaints pertaining to Turner were addressed forcing an administrative inquiry, she left the dispatch division administrator position.

Dicus, as the undersheriff, had come to perceive Dupper's repeated and continuous reference to problems and inadequate supervisory/leadership responses to those problems as an indication that Dupper was unsuited for a leadership role in the organization or unable to fit in as a team player. In August 2020, shortly after Dupper had sent comprehensive and significant evidence of and emails regarding issues in the information services division to department administration, including Dicus, Dupper was abruptly transferred out of the information services division to shift work at the West Valley Detention Center. Dupper had made no such change-of-assignment request. Unbeknownst to him, it was Dicus who had ordered, essentially unilaterally on his authority as undersheriff pertaining to personnel utilization, that he be moved to the department's main jail. To his inquiries, Dupper was told by department executives they thought he wanted to be placed there. Dupper, who at that time was in the upper third among lieutenants in the department in terms of seniority, was shocked, as jail duty is normally an assignment given to deputies newly arriving to the department or recently promoted sergeants and lieutenants. Rarely are any sworn department personnel who have already worked in a specialized position detailed to the jail, unless they have engaged in action that landed them in trouble or for which they were disciplined.

Dupper was given

a week to wrap up his three-and-a-half years at the information services division to report for shift work. On the same transfer list to be sent to the jail was another lieutenant whose professional conduct had placed his law enforcement career in significant jeopardy and who was facing discipline, which resulted, ultimately, in his being demoted back to deputy. Word around the department was that Dupper was being punished for speaking up.

After the transfer list was announced, Dupper was contacted by several members of the sheriff's executive staff, including Sheriff McMahon. Dupper informed McMahon that despite multiple members of his executive staff believing he wanted to be transferred to the jail, that was not the case. McMahon apologized to Dupper for the confusion, saying he was not sure of the reason Dupper was sent to the West Valley Detention Center, but did not rescind the transfer order.

From the outset of his time at the West Valley Detention Center, Dupper had a testy relationship with Captain Victor Moreno, then the commanding officer at the jail in Rancho Cucamonga. At that time, the department was under a federally-issued consent decree that it redress conditions deemed dangerous to inmates at the West Valley Detention Center. Upon Dupper showing up to his new duty station and introducing himself to his senior officer, Moreno told him he was dismayed with Dupper being assigned to him, indicating he believed Dupper was in some kind of trouble with the department generally or the department's top command, and that the general impression those within the department's command echelon had was that Dupper lacked discretion in that he could not keep his mouth shut with regard to things those within the organization would rather keep a lid on. "We have a lot going on here and I

don't need someone like you," Moreno said.

Moreno also informed Dupper that given his new assignment at the jail, he would no longer be able to serve on the Loma Linda City Council, to which he had been elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2018 and 2022, and that Dupper would further need to resign his position as an adjunct college professor. That night, Dupper emailed Moreno, giving him a description of what his off-duty activities entailed, indicating he had been engaged in them for several years while employed with the sheriff's department. Moreno's single-word email response to Dupper was "No." Dupper forwarded the email chain to Undersheriff Dicus.

While at the jail, Dupper, a lieutenant, was instructed by Moreno to report to a sergeant and two probationary lieutenants who had only recently been promoted from the rank of sergeant.

Dupper, unaware that he had been transferred to the jail on Dicus's orders because Dicus had misgivings about Dupper's propensity to explicitly inform the senior administrators in the department about the overall significance and minutiae of problems in the divisions where he worked and the shortcomings in the professionalism of his colleagues, relayed to Dicus his concerns about what he was witnessing at the jail. These extended to a multitude of issues, all of which represented potential liability on the part of the department and the county, including the cover-up of a Fentanyl-related inmate death, sexual harassment of female deputies, and unprofessional communication and activity on the part of management staff.

In February 2021, Dupper, yet unaware that Undersheriff Dicus was responsible for his transfer to the West Valley Detention Center or that Moreno was a Dicus ally within the sheriff's department hierarchy,

met with Dicus at an off-site location, where he informed Dicus he believed he was being subjected to a hostile work environment.

Shortly thereafter, an internal affairs investigation by the department's professional standards division was initiated, one in which Dupper was interviewed. Dupper was never, however, informed of the investigation's outcome. As that investigation was commenced, around March 2021, Dupper was moved to another jail, the Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center. While at Glen Helen, Dupper was given an annual performance evaluation, in which he was scored lower than in previous years, with the notation that he was discontented about being transferred to the jail, and he was passed over for promotion.

In May 2021, it was revealed internally within the department that Sheriff McMahon intended to retire prior to the expiration of his term in 2022 and McMahon made a formal public announcement to that effect the following month. The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors opened applications for the position of Sheriff as part of the process to appoint someone to finish out McMahon's term, although indications are that the sheriff's succession was predetermined by an understanding that the supervisors would acquiesce in selecting McMahon's recommendation. Dupper applied for the position along with Cliff Harris, a former deputy sheriff in both San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Within the application's supplemental questions, Dupper asserted one of his motivations for seeking office consisted of the department's lack of internal procedural justice and his goal or plan for how he would address it, were he to be appointed sheriff. During the board of supervisors' public meeting at which the candidates presented themselves and were subject to questions from

the board, Dupper said, "The department acts like a good ol' boys club where personal relationships matter more than qualifications or efficacy. In law enforcement, sometime we are very close-minded."

Dupper said the department's personnel were "looking for guidance. They're looking for leadership and sometimes were not giving that to them, and I think we can do better. I believe our people are good people, but they need direction and we need to set clear directions and everybody needs to follow them. The chief complaint that I get from a lot of our employees is that they believe executives are held to a different standard than they are, and that breeds internal distrust of the organization. I believe that we are way lacking in our total organizational structure. I personally struggle as to whether the office of the sheriff is fully aware of how things have progressed, and I'm not sure. I think John McMahon is a good man, but I'm not sure how much of this stuff he is aware of and chose to overlook."

When then-Supervisor Janice Rutherford asked Dupper whether he was "alleging that current leadership of the sheriff lies to members of the department," he responded, "Yes."

Dupper told the supervisors, "I believe you should establish an oversight board or committee to look into the organization. As the five most powerful elected officials in the county, that unfortunately falls on your shoulders. I think it's needed and I think it's time. We're in a world where accountability is paramount."

On July 17, 2021, Dicus was appointed sheriff.

During Dicus's time as sheriff, Dupper's career has stalled out. Despite what he contends is his suitability for promotion to captain and beyond, he has remained in the rank of lieutenant.

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## With The Way The City Council Hid The Action It Took With Regard To The Mobile Home Rent Ordinance And Its Implication Last Year, The City Manager found Himself Called Upon To Take The Blame This Year *from page 5*

ing a mobile home park is not insubstantial and that there are risks involved that can render the parks unprofitable and/or marginally profitable. Ownership must deal with empty spaces in the parks that can be difficult to fill and payment delinquencies are a common experience which will ultimately entail evictions, which can prove expensive. Another issue is the rehabilitation of mobile homes on their premises abandoned by former tenants, the ownership of which has reverted or fallen to them. Dilapidated homes represent potential liability to landlords, they say. A factor to be considered is the relative frequency or ratio between what mobile home owners consider to be “good” tenants and “bad tenants.”

In addition, the landlords and their advocates say, the value of real estate has escalated so precipitously in recent years and the regulations with regard to density on residential projects has been so relaxed that those who own mobile home parks stand to make a tremendous profit by simply shuttering their mobile home parks and either developing the property as single-family or multifamily homes themselves or selling the property to a development company with that intent. This justifies, they say, raising leasing or rental rates on mobile home space beyond the 3 percent increase per year.

At any rate, the mobile home park owners and their support network insist, whether rent control is constitutional or not, there is no requirement that a city engage in rent control efforts and cities are free to let the market control what is to be paid for leasing space in a mobile home park.

Whatever financial hardships the owners of the mobile home

parks are enduring pale in comparison to what those who are living in those parks, who are in large measure senior citizens living on fixed incomes of families living at or near the poverty level and therefore among the City of Gracious Living’s most vulnerable residents, there advocates say. There was no justification for the way in which the city council blindsided them by withdrawing the rent protection previous city fathers felt was called for. The fashion in which the city council acted in May and June of 2025 lacked transparency, they maintain, and was a betrayal of the mobile home residents who had counted upon city officials to not only be open about how they function but to provide everyone an opportunity to weigh in on city policy before it is formulated, altered or disregarded. There are some who went even further than that, saying they sensed in the manner in which the Mobilehome Rent Review ordinance that had been in existence at least since 1999 something venal, i.e., crooked, had taken place, that the mobile home park owners who had a lot of money riding on doing away with rent control would not be above “greasing” city officials, including the mayor and members of the city council, in other words providing them with bribes or kickbacks.

That was a compelling theory, given the secretiveness that had surrounded the action taken in May and June of 2025. As more and more mobile home residents became aware of what had occurred this spring and city officials reacted to the growing outrage among them, the distrust of City Hall deepened and city officials found themselves best with a credibility gap.

In the face of the dis-

may over the elimination of the Mobilehome Rent Review ordinance, the council sought to placate the 2.81 percent of the city’s 79,040 residents who live in mobile homes by proposing to revisit the concept of the Upland City Code incorporating a mobile home rent control provision.

In placing the proposed replacement ordinance on the May 11, 2026 city council meeting agenda, City Manager Michael Blay had Development Services Director Dahlquest and Housing Manager Diane Cotto prepare a staff report with regard to a set of options of what the new ordinance should consist of as it considered resurrecting the element of the city code jettisoned last year.

In the report, Dahlquest and Cotto stated, “The proposed action supports the city’s goal of responsive and transparent governance by establishing a fair and balanced framework that protects mobilehome residents from unreasonable rent increases; ensures mobilehome park owners receive a fair and reasonable return; and establishes a clear, enforceable and workable process for rent adjustments and dispute resolution.”

Under the subject heading of “Issues and Analysis,” Dahlquest and Cotto stated, “The elimination of the city’s Mobilehome Rent Stabilization Ordinance was part of a broader update last year to the city’s municipal code. The previous ordinance contained several outdated and unworkable provisions, including limitations that did not align with State of California timelines,

## Three Caught While A Dozen Slip Away After Train Car Burglary Goes Awry *from page 3*

fused to pull over, but then stopped at the side of the 215 Freeway.

“Approximately ten subjects fled from the vehicle on foot,” according

to the sheriff’s department.

Fernando Barrza, 19, of San Bernardino was quickly collared, and deputies also managed to overtake Rodrigo Luna Arredondo, 32, of San Bernardino. All but one of the others who had emerged from the vehicle scattered upon making it across the freeway, and were not caught.

Another of those fleeing, whose identity has not been released, “was struck by a vehicle while running across the freeway,” according to the department. The man survived, but was taken to a hospital, where as of earlier this week he last week he yet remains.

According the department items taken from the train were in the ve-

current economic conditions, and processes that could not be effectively implemented.”

At least a handful of the city’s mobile home residents were suspicious. Dahlquest’s and Cotto’s emphasis on “transparent governance” was at a variance with the way the city had hidden the mobile home rent survey ordinance the previous year.

In framing the background for the action to be taken, Dahlquest and Cotto engaged in a slight and subtle rewriting of history. At the very least, Dahlquest and Cotto were implying with the language “broader update” that a replacement to what had been removed last year was intended all along. That appears doubtful, at best. The secretiveness with which the mobile home rent increase limitation had been removed, followed by more than eight months during which the issue was entirely ignored suggests that the city fathers had orchestrated in silence or virtual silence the disposal of the Mobilehome Rent Review ordinance in a very purposeful way, and were testing to see if and how the mobile home residents and the population in general was going to react. The implication was that if there was no reaction or minimal reaction without a substantial show of outrage or protest, the “update” of the Upland Municipal Code with regard to mobile homes and the rent those who live in them paid would never take place.

ing, City Manager Michael Blay fell on his sword in an effort to protect the mayor and city council from the wrath of the public and stem inquiries on the part of some of the city’s residents that might lead to revelations with regard to the mayor’s and some or perhaps even all of the council members’ connections to the ownership of the mobile home parks. Just as Mayor Velto was about to open the hearing for public comment, Blay said, “Mayor, prior to opening to public speaking, I’d just like to make a brief statement about how we got here on this. On May 27, 2025, as part of the annual omnibus municipal ordinance cleanup effort, which we do each year, Chapter 658 was repealed in its entirety. This 40-year-old ordinance was removed because there were significant gaps that could not be effectively implemented and were at odds with state law timelines. Other factors included an HOA [homeowners association] requirement for each mobile home park, forms and procedures that were never created or approved and an arbitration process without an identified provider or established fees. I did a poor job of informing the council of all of the elements of this rescinded ordinance. The elements included a provision for rent control that had been in place for 40 years. I failed to provide you with a red-lined version of this ordinance text being eliminated, so your vote back then to rescind the ordinance was based on incomplete information and that’s my fault. I’m responsible

for the situation we’re in tonight and, as a result, staff has brought forth options for the city council to consider.”

While some might have been misled by what Blay said, the more astute, particularly those who recognized that the city council had taken up the matter because Mayor Velto and the council were at that point reacting to the anger of a cross section of their constituents and had purposely done nothing for close to a year to “update” the portions of the Upland Municipal Code they had altered nearly 12 months earlier, they immediately understood that the city manager was covering for the city council.

Fourteen people spoke during the public comment portion of the meeting, participated During public comment, a resident identified only as Nicholas said, “Upland made a promise to these residents of these mobile home parks. They believed that promise meant something. They believed Upland understood the unique reality of mobile home ownership. The promise was removed in a way that ordinary citizens could not reasonably have known about, organized around or come here to challenge before the damage done.”

Brian Bender, the general manager of El Dorado Mobile Home Park, told the city council, “For 40 years we have operated under the prior rent control ordinance, absorbing 89 percent of CPI increase while our costs outpace that cap every year. Our average space rent today is \$840. In the last 15 years, we

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hicle.

Barrza and Arredondo were booked on suspicion of possession of stolen property and criminal conspiracy.

Bail was set at a relatively low \$30,000, a ploy to see if an effort to free the pair on bond will take place, whereupon

## Former Federal Judge Who Served As A Volunteer Medic With Sheriff's Department's Search & Rescue Team Grew Concerned About Safety Issues With The Department's Helicopters *from page 6*

On August 9, 2021, Dupper met with Dicus, Assistant Sheriff Sam Fisk and Deputy Chief Chris Fisher. In the meeting, Dupper laid out a timeline of issues from his work in the information services division, West Valley Detention Center and Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center. In his response, Dicus made clear that he considered Dupper to be "selfish" and that he was "lucky" to have been promoted as far as he had been. He further stated that Dupper could not "get along" with the captains he worked for within the information services division and at the West Valley Detention Center and that he had "made a lot of people angry" with what he had told the board of supervisors about the department. At that point, Dicus disclosed that he had intentionally reassigned Dupper to the jail.

In March 2022, Dupper was transferred to his current assignment at the Highland Sheriff's Station.

Dupper, who has been eligible to promote to Captain since January 2019, has consistently been passed over for promotion. While Dupper has been in the rank of lieutenant, at least 57 lieutenants have been promoted to captain, most of those were made directly while Dicus has been sheriff. Of those 57, five were promoted to captain had more time on as a lieutenant than Dupper. The remaining 52 lieutenants promoted to captain during that timeframe had spent an equal or less amount of time as lieutenant than Dupper. Currently, there are 28 captain positions in the department. Several of those promoted to captain while Dupper was eligible for promotion to captain have either been promoted again or have retired from the department.

During Dicus's tenure

as sheriff, the number of elevated-rank and command positions in the department have increased substantially. In 2019, under Sheriff McMahon, there was a single undersheriff, two assistant sheriffs and six deputy chiefs. In 2023, the year after Dicus, running as the incumbent, was elected sheriff with 74.27 percent of the vote, the number of deputy chief positions had jumped to eight. At present, there is still one undersheriff, assisted by three assistant sheriffs and 11 deputy chiefs.

While Dupper has remained at lieutenant rank, a number of the issues he raised – or attempted to raise – with senior administration exacerbated themselves into major problems or scandals.

In 2023, Russian mobsters, working from Eastern Europe, hacked the sheriff's department's computer system, taking control of data storage and retrieval capabilities and communications capabilities. The cyberattack utilized ransomware that could not be disinfected from the operating system without the application of an unlocking algorithm. Efforts to salvage the system were unsuccessful. The department's options were limited to either giving in to those who had hijacked the system and complying with their demands or the complete abandonment of its computers together with their hardware and software and the substitution of another system and comprehensive replacement of the stationary and mobile computing devices used by the department's deputies, higher-ranking officers and support personnel. Ultimately, the department chose the former course, paying a \$1.1 million ransom, \$588,148 of which was covered by the county's insurance carrier. It was

belatedly acknowledged that cybersecurity precautions Dupper and other members of the information services division had been advocating but which Ohanesian had countermanded would have likely prevented the interruption from occurring.

In response to mounting complaints from other department employees at the West Valley Detention Center, Captain Moreno was transferred to the coroner's division, where he was entrusted with managing operations there. While in that post, he entered into what was described as "an inappropriate extramarital relationship" with Deputy Coroner Investigator Rebecca London. That relationship apparently ended badly. London later reported that she was receiving threatening/harassing phone calls late at night from individuals acting on behalf of Captain Moreno. In late 2024, Moreno was transferred out of the coroner's division to oversee the Fontana Sheriff's Station. That transfer was made, department sources report, because senior department personnel learned of the deteriorating circumstance in the coroner's office that had come about because of the situation involving Moreno and London. Nevertheless, Moreno and others maintained that he remained in the good graces of the department's top commanders and was on track to be promoted to deputy chief upon the next vacation of an assistant sheriff position, which would involve a deputy chief being elevated to that spot, creating a corresponding vacancy among the deputy chief roster.

On January 5, 2025, Deputy London died by her own hand, having committed suicide, it was widely reported, as a consequence of the circumstance involving Moreno. London's death investigation was conducted by the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.

At that point, the

scandal could no longer be contained, and an ad hoc internal departmental panel was formed to look into the matter. After the delivery of a report and a hearing of the panel which ended in a recommendation that Moreno be terminated, Dicus overruled that finding. Instead, Moreno voluntarily retired.

In August 2024, Dupper filed an unfair employment/whistleblower lawsuit against San Bernardino County, under California Labor Code §1102.5, alleging he was being retaliated against.

Dupper's experience is paralleled by that of Stephen Miller.

Miller is an attorney and former federal judge, who from January 1998 to February 2005 served as a part-time United States magistrate judge in the Central District of California.

Miller left the federal bench upon being appointed, in January 2005, by then-California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to one of three regional senior assistant inspector general positions to assist the California Inspector General in monitoring federal court orders that grew out of the settlement of a lawsuit involving the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The inspector general and his support network of attorneys and investigators were tasked with the primary duties of overseeing and monitoring peace officer misconduct investigations and discipline in the areas of the so-called blue code of silence, peace officer honesty and integrity, and the use of lethal force.

Miller was a volunteer member of the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team.

A major feature of the search and rescue team is its access to sheriff's department aircraft, which are of tremendous utility in carrying out assignments in the varied geographical expanse of San Bernardino County, which includes 18,697 square miles of desert,

the vast majority of the San Bernardino Mountains and the San Gorgonio Wilderness – including 11,503-foot elevation San Gorgonio Peak, 11,287-foot elevation Iron Mountain, 11,205-foot elevation Jepsen Peak, 11,010-foot elevation Bighorn Mountain, 10,871-foot elevation Anderson Peak, 10,821-foot elevation Charlton Peak, 10,760-foot elevation Doubletop Mountain, 10,680-foot elevation Shields Peak 10,649-foot elevation San Bernardino Peak, 10,288-foot elevation Grinnell Mountain and 10,178-foot elevation Lake Peak, 9,954-foot elevation Sugarloaf Mountain 8,767-foot elevation Black Peak, 7,276-foot elevation Little Bear Mountain and 6,771 Big Bear Mountain and 5,737-foot elevation Pinnacles Peak near Lake Arrowhead – and the eastern portion of the San Gabriel Mountains with its 10,588-foot elevation Mt. San Antonio, 8,859-foot elevation Cucamonga Peak, 8,696-foot elevation Ontario Peak and 8,441-foot elevation Bighorn Peak.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department Aviation Unit operates 18 aircraft, including 13 helicopters and five fixed wing planes. These include six Airbus H125 helicopters, one Eurocopter AS350 B3 helicopter, three Bell UH-1H medium helicopters, a single Bell 212 medium helicopter and two Subaru Bell 412EPX high-performance utility helicopters (added in 2022, along with two Mahindra Air Van airplanes and three Beechcraft King Air airplanes.

Miller's participation on the search and rescue team put him close contact with the department's aviation unit. As a consequence, he became aware of multiple incidents which caused him and others concern. These included:

- Sergeant Dan Futscher, one of the department's helicopter pilots, violated federal regulations, the pilot operating handbook and

station policy by failing to conduct a proper pre-flight inspection before the start-up of an Airbus H125 helicopter, whereupon, a wrench left on the rotor head was flung from the helicopter's rotor blades, the wrench was cut in half and parts of the wrench flew proximate to at least three mechanics, any of whom could have been killed.

- A sergeant within the aviation division told department personnel who were aware of what occurred during that particular Airbus H125 start-up that it was not necessary to prepare a safety report.

- A failure by Corporal Edward Leon, another department pilot, to conduct a proper pre-flight inspection, which resulted in an unlatched cowling during a flight carrying rescue team members who were engaging in airborne night hoist training. Had the unsecured cowling advanced into the rotor system during training or flight, the entire crew could have been killed or catastrophically injured.

- Leon attempted to have his subordinates remain silent and say nothing about the unlatched cowling.

- Sergeant Jon Anderson directed Leon not to complete or file a safety report with regard to the unsecured cowling.

- The incident relating to the unlatched cowling was not logged in the aircraft flight log, and an aviation division safety officer did not learn about it and mechanics did not conduct a precautionary inspection relating to it until 30 days after the occurrence.

- When a safety officer, after being directed to do so by a lieutenant, called Sergeant Jon Anderson, who was the senior officer on call the night of the incident involving the unsecured cowling, to ask about the absence of a safety report, Anderson dressed the safety officer down, saying, "I am a sergeant and I made the decision." Shortly after this first phone conversation, An-

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